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**Stephanos Nirmalendu Ghosh Lectures, 1930-31**

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANITY TO ETHICS**



# THE CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANITY TO ETHICS

*Stephanos Nirmalendu Ghosh Lectures, 1930-31*

BY

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**Dedicated  
To the Memory of  
My Mother**





## PREFACE

These lectures, delivered before the University of Calcutta, in 1930 on the Stephanos Nirmalendu Ghosh foundation, were composed with an audience in view, the majority of which belonged to other religions than the Christian, and must be read with that circumstance in mind. It should not be assumed that topics of which a discussion of Christian ethics, carried on by a Christian for Christians, might naturally be expected to include some notice, but which are not mentioned at all, or only slightly mentioned in this book, are therefore regarded by the writer as unimportant. They may only have been considered by him as matters in which non-Christians could not be expected to take the same interest as Christians.

I have not attempted to remove from these pages the traces of their origin as lectures intended to be heard rather than read, and heard by a particular audience at a particular place and on a particular occasion.

My thanks are due to the Senate of the Calcutta University for the opportunity afforded me by my election to the Lectureship of expressing my thoughts on a subject which has much occupied my mind, to the Founder of the Lectureship, Rai Bahadur G. C. Ghosh, C I.E , to those who honoured me by taking the Chair at my lectures, and to the many other kind friends whose encouragement and hospitality made my visit to Calcutta so delightful and profitable ; and lastly to my wife for manifold help in the preparation of the book for publication.

My quotations from the Bible have been taken indiscriminately from the ' Authorized ' and ' Revised ' English Versions, once or twice I have preferred a rendering different from that in either of these.

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# THE CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANITY TO ETHICS

## I

### INTRODUCTORY

It is with a profound emotion that I find myself addressing an Indian audience in the University of Calcutta. Though I have never before this month \* set foot in India, the traditions of Indian service, the talk of kinsfolk whose lives had been spent in that service, pictures of India, of the costumes and dwellings of its inhabitants, of its temples and imagery, the scent of Indian sandal-wood, the beauty of Indian workmanship in silver and ivory, these have been about me from my childhood. My mother was born in this great city, in the old building of Bishop's College at Sibpur, now in the occupation of the Bengal Civil Engineering College, a counterfeit presentment whereof on a silver inkstand has been a familiar object to my eyes all my life. Her father was the first Principal of Bishop's College, appointed to his post by the first Bishop of Calcutta, Thomas Middleton, the school fellow of Coleridge and Charles Lamb. I have in my own veins Indian as well as British blood, and am proud thus to share in the inheritance of two great peoples, whose fates Divine Providence has strangely intertwined for the ultimate blessing, as I devoutly believe, of both alike.

I am glad also to call to mind that the ancient University of Oxford from which I come has many links with that ~~younger sister~~ of hers which has honoured me on the present

occasion with the invitation to deliver this course of lectures. I rejoice to have the opportunity of meeting again more than one Indian friend whose studies in Oxford I have in past years had the pleasure of assisting; and—although the exchange is, I know well, but a poor one for you—it is a great satisfaction to me to speak to you of what I have learned about the things of the spirit, as we in Oxford have in this very year \* had the opportunity of hearing from your eminent professor Mr Radhakrishnan and from the illustrious poet Rabindranath Tagore what they had to tell us, out of the treasure of their own thought and experience, concerning these high matters

I have, as in duty bound, read carefully the records which the Calendar of your University contains of the designs and wishes of the munificent founder of the Stephanos Nimalendu Ghosh Lectureship in Comparative Religion. With much wisdom, as I venture to think, he has stated fully what was in his mind in establishing this lectureship, without making acceptance of his own views legally binding upon his Lecturer. This liberal attitude of his enables me to feel that I shall not be the less carrying out my duty as his beneficiary if, while thoroughly in sympathy with what I gather from his ~~words~~ words to have been his main intention, I should seem not to agree in every respect with the opinions which are expressed in his correspondence with the authorities of this University. With him I see in every religion, truly so called, an utterance of God's Spirit dwelling within men's souls and there revealing him to them. It is probable, however, that I attach more importance than, from some of his expressions, I take it that he is inclined to attach, to the actual history of the divine self-revelation and to the connexion which this history suggests may exist between particular moral ideals and the beliefs and practices with which they are found to be historically associated. In the conviction, however, that "in unselfish love and service to our fellow men according to the essence of the teaching of Christ, lies the highest

ideal for man, and that life under the guidance of this ideal constitutes the highest advancement of human personality ” --in this conviction, which I have stated in the Founder’s own words, I am completely at one with him.

The Stephanos Numalendu Ghosh Lecture is called a lecture on Comparative Religion ; and the subject which I have chosen for the course which I am to deliver on this foundation is the Contribution of Christianity to Ethics I will ask you to allow me now to state in what sense I take this subject to be one falling under the head of Comparative Religion or, to use what I think is a more correct expression, of the Comparative Study of Religion

That study is one which can never, in my judgment, be profitably pursued at all except by a student who knows from his own experience what religion is, and who is no mere spectator from the outside of beliefs and practices which he cannot imagine himself as sharing, but is familiar with religious faith and worship as a normal and habitual part of life As regards the comparison with one another of different religions, it is plain that, where we are dealing with religions no longer anywhere held or practised—such, for example, as those of the ancient Greeks and Romans—or where we are concerned with religions which, though still held or practised, are only held and practised by people at too low a level of cultural development to be able to reflect upon their own religion and make it an object of scientific investigation—that in such cases we are perforce compelled to study from without what there is no one qualified to study from within But where a religion is actually held and practised by persons who can give a reason for the faith which is in them, it is no less plain that any mere study of such a religion from without must be, if it is to be of any real value, continually corrected and controlled by the experience of those who know it from within Therefore, I should have regarded it as an impertinence for me in these Lectures to put before men who know from within religions which I only know (and that very superficially) from without, any account of what is far more familiar to them than to me ; and I have on this account preferred to take as my subject my



own religion, which alone I know from within, and to expound, to the best of my ability, what I take to be its main ethical principles, leaving any comparison with those of other faiths, which I do not know from within, to be drawn by those who hear me for themselves. Where these ethical principles, or the form in which they have been expressed in Christianity, seem to be organically connected with the doctrines characteristic of that religion, I shall not hesitate to point out the connexion; but, as the phrase which I have chosen as the title of my course itself indicates, I shall regard the field of ethics as a field which lies open for every man's reason and conscience to explore, yet in which the religious experience of any particular man or group of men may assist the explorer in discovering truth which he might not otherwise have come at. As a Christian, I cannot indeed speak of the contribution of Christianity to ethical theory as I might, let us say, of Plato's contribution to it, or of Kant's. I could not be a Christian if I did not regard Christianity as providing, so to say, a focus from which the objects which meet the eye of the explorer of the field of ethics may be seen in their right proportions, yet I neither suppose that all ethical knowledge is historically derived from Christianity, nor that historical Christianity has done equal justice to all the ethical principles which it has acknowledged; nor yet that Christianity has nothing to learn in this or other fields from other religions, which have served to convey to the souls of those who have devoutly practised them a genuine revelation of that divine love and goodness whereof Christ is to me, as to the founder of these lectures, the highest manifestation.

I propose in the main to treat my subject *historically*, attempting, so far as the limits of my knowledge and of the time at my disposal permit, not only to set before you the moral teaching of the Christian religion, but also to describe in outline the effect of that teaching upon men's moral beliefs and practice. But, in order to put you, if I may so express myself, at my point of view it is desirable, before entering upon this main topic of my course, briefly to indicate what I shall understand in it by *Christianity*, and what by *Ethics*.

As regards *ethics*, it is obviously possible to describe what men have at various times and in various places thought that they *ought* to do, under what influences their opinions on this matter were formed, and how far their actual conduct corresponded with these opinions, without entering upon the question of the meaning of the word *ought* or a consideration of the divergent doctrines which have been put forward by philosophers upon this subject. Nevertheless, a man's convictions as to the nature of the moral judgments which he describes cannot but affect his attitude in describing them, and, if you are content to do me the honour of bearing with me at all in my account of the contribution of Christianity to ethics, you may reasonably desire to know where I stand in respect of the controversies which have been raised about the origin and validity of our moral consciousness. But it must be borne in mind that, should any one dissent from my position in respect of these controversies, it would not necessarily imply that he would be bound to reject my account of the history of the effect of Christianity on moral teaching and conduct. This being so, I must ask to be allowed to express my views dogmatically, without entering upon arguments in its defence, which would, if fully developed, leave me no room for doing even as much justice as I may otherwise hope to do to the subject on which I have undertaken to address you.

I can, I think, put my view most shortly and clearly to those who know something of modern European thought about ethics, by saying that I follow Kant in regarding morality as what he called a 'categorical imperative', and our consciousness of moral obligation as an ultimate factor in our spiritual nature. When Kant called morality a 'categorical imperative' he meant that, when we feel *morally* obliged to do or to abstain from doing something or other, it is not merely as a means which we must adopt in order to attain a particular end. A command which can be expressed by saying 'Do this, if you want to get so-and-so' or 'to be so-and-so' is, in Kant's terminology, a '*hypothetical*' imperative only. Of any need to obey such a command I can

always get rid by saying ' I don't want to get this thing which you tell me I shall only get, or to be the sort of person that you tell me I shall only become by taking this course ; or, at least, I don't want it enough to pay for it the price of taking this course, although I know that I cannot get this thing or be this sort of person except at that price ' But of a truly moral obligation, such as Kant calls a ' categorical imperative ', I cannot thus get rid I feel myself bound to take a certain course whether I like it or not, and whatever I stand to gain or to lose by it I shall reproach myself if I do not take it, whatever the consequences may be It may no doubt be very difficult to be sure that we are thus bound in a particular case. It is possible to have what has been called a ' false conscience ', and to continue to feel uncomfortable about doing things which we have been accustomed to regard as ' wrong, ' although we may be now convinced that they are innocent or right ; but, unless we had a consciousness of what may be called *absolute* obligation, quite different in kind from the perception that a desired end or object can only be attained by using certain means—unless we had, I say, such a consciousness of absolute obligation, we should not experience this difficulty or suffer from this unjustified feeling. The consciousness of moral obligation then, of the distinction between right and wrong, is, in my view, something quite other than the appreciation of things as capable of satisfying some desire or other, and as therefore good It cannot, in my judgment, be deduced, as it has sometimes been suggested that it can be deduced, from the consciousness of a ' common good ', that is, of something which I present to myself as able to satisfy, not a private desire of my own, but a desire which I take to be shared with me by others, and the satisfaction of which I could only enjoy if I believed that my enjoyment also was shared by others For from the consideration that there is a *good* or that there are *goods*—things, that is, the possession of which must satisfy our desires,—the enjoyment whereof must be common to us with others who desire their possession as we do, we could not, I think, *infer* that we were unconditionally bound to seek them Our sense of unconditional

obligation could not be reached in this way ; it is an ultimate factor in our spiritual life or experience ; though, *having* this consciousness of obligation, we find it easy to associate it with the attainment of such a ' common good ' as I have described, and to recognise the pursuit thereof as being our *duty*.

Although, however, the consciousness of moral obligation, of the distinction between right and wrong, be (as I have said before) quite other than the apprehension of things as capable of satisfying some desire or other, and therefore *good* ; so that it would seem at first sight to be possible that we might be bound to do something, or to abstain from doing something, even when by such action or such abstinence from action we should attain nothing which would present itself to us as *good* in the sense of *satisfactory* , yet it is just the paradox of human life that no one who is really conscious of a moral obligation could find satisfaction in a failure to fulfil it, or, on the other hand, could avoid finding satisfaction *so far* in the fulfilment of moral obligation as such, whatever pains or disadvantages such fulfilment might entail. Nor is the satisfaction thus found a satisfaction really comparable with satisfactions arising from other sources. I do not mean that it need seem to be a *greater* or *intensifier* satisfaction ; it very well may not. But it cannot be outweighed by satisfactions of a *different kind*, arising from other sources than the fulfilment of a moral obligation, in the same way as that in which other satisfactions may be outweighed by rival satisfactions of the *same kind*. One may, for example, decide quite without any misgiving to sacrifice, let us say, the advantage of habitually living in a climate which suits one for the sake of the freedom of movement which may be secured by the possession of a larger income ; for here the advantages compared are advantages of the same kind—of the kind which some writers call *economic*. But whenever a man, from whatever motive, violates his sense of moral obligation, he may indeed put the violation out of his head, but he cannot recall it without self-reproach ; and self-reproach is, I take it, something essentially different from regret at having missed some enjoyment which one would

have welcomed, but which one could not have except at a price which one does not care to pay.

All this is the mere commonplace of ethical thought. I have only gone over it in order to show just where I stand : to make it plain that, as I said, I follow Kant in regarding the consciousness of moral obligation as something which belongs to the ultimate constitution of our spiritual nature, inexplicable in terms of *other* factors in that constitution, and, in particular, not deducible, as some members have seemed to suggest, from the conception of a ' common good ' ; although the conception of a common good and the consciousness of moral obligation stand in a very close historical connexion with one another, so that it may, I think, be truly said that they belong together, and that no view of the universe which does justice to the one will be able to dispense with giving an important place to the other.

Such a theory of ethics will moreover, I think, be bound (and here again I am in agreement with Kant) to lead on to the conception, as indispensable to our view of the universe, of what goes in the European schools of philosophy by the name of the *Summum Bonum*, a supreme or universal Good. Just as it is the characteristic feature of the human or rational mind, so far as it is rational, that for it every experience, as it comes, presents itself not in isolation from every other, but as what I may venture to call an *instalment* of a whole of experience, or rather of a whole of reality, revealing itself in each experience ; so too our recognition of anything as *good* or *satisfactory* is never, I hold, a recognition of it as such in isolation from everything else, but, again, as an *instalment* of a universal Good, or, I would rather say, of a good Universe. Thus, though we may find *pleasure* in an isolated experience, the very word *good*, like its opposite *evil*, qualifies not the isolated experience or object of experience *alone*, but an ultimate and all embracing Reality which is revealing itself partially therein. Hence indeed arises what is called the ' problem of evil ' . That there should be evil at all seems to derogate from the goodness of the Whole, precisely because that there is good at all presents itself as an augury of the goodness of the Whole.

We cannot indeed, I think, identify the sense that a certain action or rather a certain volition is obligatory or *right* with the perception of its conduciveness to the goodness of the universe, we do not arrive at the sense of its rightness or obligatoriness in that way. But I cannot, I feel sure, go on to consider what is implied by the rightness or obligatoriness of a certain kind of action or volition without arriving at the notion of a supreme or universal Good, or of a Goodness supreme in the universe, apart from which what Kant called the 'categorical' or unconditional 'imperative' of morality must appear as a sheer mystery, and the world in which it is found, yet in whose constitution it has no such part to play as its intrinsic authoritativeness would seem to claim for it, as therefore a world incoherent and irrational.

So much then for what I mean when I speak of morality or of the science of morality, which we call Ethics. But I must repeat that the historical account which I hope to give of the influence exerted by Christianity alike upon men's views of what they ought to do, and upon their actual conduct, may be a true account, even though I should be mistaken in my view of the nature of morality, and I must add further that I am far from asserting that this view (though I should be prepared to argue that it is not only consistent with Christianity, but consorts with it better than any other view) is one which all Christian thinkers have held; or that, as a philosophical theory, it forms part of the teaching the acceptance of which entitles a man to call himself a Christian. Christianity is not a philosophical theory, it is a way of life; yet, as every philosophical theory is an interpretation of life, those whose way of life is Christianity will necessarily and rightly look for a philosophical theory which can give a meaning to that way of life. If no such theory of a particular way of life can be found, the failure to find one will cast a doubt on the reasonableness of the way of life itself. On the other hand, whatever our way of life may be, we shall not be satisfied to accept a theory which is inconsistent with any genuine experience that we have enjoyed in following that way of life; although it may well be that we may accept one which interprets that

experience in terms other than those in which we first described it to ourselves ; and so may lead us to value it differently, and ultimately to modify it, or even to abandon it for one of greater possibilities and promise.

I said that I would try to state at the outset of this course of lectures on the contribution of Christianity to ethics not only what I mean by *ethics* but also what I mean by *Christianity*. When I shall speak of Christianity I shall not confine myself to what is to be found within the covers of the New Testament, although in this collection of books we must recognise not only the source of almost all that we know about the beginnings of Christianity, but also the norm or standard to which, whenever in any religious organisation which calls itself by this name of Christian men have roused themselves from the routine of habit into which all human life is prone to fall, they have turned to test their doctrine and practice by that which they have there found expressed. I shall then not confine myself to what is to be found in the New Testament, but shall take into account the whole development of Christian life and teaching down through the ages from the time of Christ to the present day. I shall therefore have to recognize that there have been and are, among those who call themselves Christians, very various and even conflicting interpretations of the religion which they all alike profess ; interpretations that have given rise to divisions among them which all true Christians lament as impairing that unity which should ideally belong to the fellowship of the disciples of one Master, who was the prophet of one God, and who proclaimed that God as the one loving Father of all men. Christians can recognize indeed in the different interpretations which different teachers and different religious bodies have given to the message which is entrusted to the whole Church the expression of different forms of spiritual life which have been occasioned in different individuals or groups by their experience of the same spiritual impulse, their communion with the same spiritual presence ; and can thus acknowledge in those different interpretations an enrichment of their common inheritance. But they must nevertheless deplore the failure of the sense of fellowship to

overcome either the temptation of those in authority to deny to others freedom of thought and criticism or the tendency in those who have claimed such freedom for themselves to enjoy apart that experience of God which should have been gladly thrown into the common stock of the whole society of the faithful.

I have already stated that I propose to treat my subject *historically*. Now there is no doubt that *historically* the Christian religion arose within the bosom of Judaism. Its Founder and its first teachers were, whatever else or more they may have been, pious Jews; and the religious traditions of the Jews must always be borne in mind by students of the New Testament as the presupposition and background of all that is therein contained. Christianity has gone abroad into the world with a message of salvation for all mankind; and in so doing has come into contact with many other faiths and philosophies and ways of worship which were unknown to those who at the first had beheld the glory of God in the face of their Master,\* and had set out to convey to others the story of his life and death and resurrection. It has not only come into contact with these other faiths and philosophies and ways of worship, but has learned from them what it has found there suitable or necessary for the expression of its own growing experience of God. This makes it all the more important for students of the New Testament and of the religion which has always looked to the New Testament and still looks to it as its standard and model of feeling, thought, action and speech, to bear in mind that the conception of God and of man's relation to God which the New Testament assumes, and which Christianity presupposes, is not that which was familiar to Greek philosopher, northern bard, or Indian sage, however much Christians may have learned in the past or may come to learn in the future from the religious experience of those or other thinkers and prophets, nations or schools of thought, whom or which they have encountered; but is that of the Hebrew prophets and psalmists, the concep-

\* 2 Cor. IV 6.



tion, in fact, which is enshrined in the books that go by the name of the Old Testament. This is why the Christian church has always included and must always include the Old Testament in her sacred Scripture. It is not because the myths and legends, the chronicles and war songs, the rules of public worship, the stories of heroes and of saints which it contains are without parallels in other ancient sacred books; not because it enjoys among the ancient literatures of the world a monopoly of high ethical teaching or of noble religious poetry. These are not claims which can be justly made for it. But it is because without it the key to the language in which Christianity has ever clothed its message to the world would be lost. And it has to be remembered that it is a characteristic of the Christian view of the world that, according to it, *history*, the actual course and order of events, unique and unrepeatable, has a reality and importance which in many great philosophies, both eastern and western, it is not allowed to possess. It is a consequence of this that, since the direct antecedents and presuppositions of the Christian Gospel are, as a matter of fact, to be found in the religion of Israel, the Old Testament, which enshrines that religion, must always occupy in relation to Christianity a position peculiar to itself, in which no other ancient scripture, however rich in spiritual teaching, can take its place.

If this be true in regard to the whole system of faith and worship which we call Christianity, its truth is not least evident in regard to the ethics, the system of social and personal conduct, which is associated with Christianity. It might indeed be plausibly maintained that the most considerable contribution of Christianity to the ethics actually current in the civilized world of to-day has consisted in the domestication among the Gentiles, that is to say the nations other than Israel, of the religious and moral ideals of Judaism. Jewish scholars have sometimes remarked upon what seems to them the unfairness of Christian writers who claim, as characteristically Christian, ways of thinking and acting which they have themselves been accustomed to regard as characteristically Jewish. But often these Christian writers, who may

have come but little into contact with the religious life of their Jewish neighbours, have not been thinking of Christianity in contradistinction from Judaism at all, but rather of the religious and moral teaching of the Bible, including Old and New Testament alike, in contradistinction from the standards practically recognized and acted upon in the secular life of the modern western world ; and it is obvious that, in such a contrast, the pious Jew and the pious Christian will be found upon one side. For of the Bible one part, the Old Testament, is acknowledged as sacred Scripture by Jew and Christian alike, and the other, the New Testament, is itself the work of Jews , for such, as I have before observed, the Founder and first teachers of Christianity, and the authors of its earliest records, unquestionably were

I propose then to begin with a brief account of the ethical principles announced in the teaching of Christ himself as recorded in the pages of the New Testament, and to present these as the central and most characteristic contribution of Christianity to ethics, that is, to the general tradition of thought and belief about human conduct now current in the civilized world.

I shall go on to attempt a comparison and contrast of these characteristically Christian principles with those obtaining among the peoples with whom Christianity was earliest in contact, namely, the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans to exhibit the reciprocal influences upon one another of the moral ideals of Christianity and those of the Graeco-Roman world which it set out from its Jewish cradle to convert, and to illustrate the history of Christian influence upon the moral ideals of the peoples who, after the invasion of the Roman empire by the northern barbarians, entered into the western inheritance of that empire. I shall then return to the grand principles of Christian morality, as seen in the light thrown upon them by our historical survey, and discuss their bearing upon the actual life of the modern world, with special attention to the place of religious worship, of asceticism, and of social service, in a system of ethics inspired by Christian principles ; and attempt in my final lecture to gather up the conclusions which

I take myself to have reached, and to present you with a general estimate of the debt owed by the civilized world of to-day in respect of its moral ideals to the teaching and influence of the religion about which, because it is my own and I therefore know it from within as I do no other, I am alone qualified to speak.

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## II

### THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS.

It is related in the Gospel of Mark,\* the earliest in date, as scholars are now agreed, of the four lives of Jesus which are contained in the New Testament, that Jesus, being asked by a scribe, that is, by one of the professional interpreters of the sacred law of the Jews, which commandment is the first of all, replied as follows. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all Lord is One; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength The second is this. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.' The story goes on to represent the scribe whose question had led to this declaration as welcoming and endorsing it, and being on that account pronounced by Jesus to be 'not far from the kingdom of God' In the Gospel of Luke † the declaration itself is put into the mouth of a 'lawyer' or expositor of the sacred law, who had asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life; and who, when asked by Jesus in his turn what he has found on the subject in the sacred law of which he professed to be an exponent, gives an answer practically identical with the statement attributed by Mark to Jesus himself This answer is then, according to Luke's account, approved by Jesus, who, in reply to a further question as to the meaning of the expression 'our neighbour,' relates the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan, in which a man who has been maltreated by robbers finds neighbourly treatment not from members of the priestly tribe of his own people, who pass by and leave him lying where he was, but from one of a despised and alien race, who shows mercy upon him, and takes care of him.

\* XII. 28 ff.

† X. 25 ff.

The declaration itself, which Jesus is thus related to have either himself made or approved when made by another, is a quotation from the Old Testament and is confessedly put forward as such. It is a quotation, however, not from one passage of the Old Testament, but from two, occurring in two different books, and here put together \* The combination of the two would seem to be original with Jesus, but for the fact that in the Gospel of Luke it is ascribed to his interlocutor. For this at least suggests that it did not strike its reporter as an innovation on the best type of contemporary Jewish teaching. In the second of the two passages, that which bids us love our neighbour as ourselves, it is important to observe that the expression 'thy neighbour,' where it occurs in its original Old Testament context, is obviously intended to be equivalent to 'child of thy people' in the preceding clause; and it was no doubt the intention of Luke, in appending here the parable of the Good Samaritan, to indicate that on the lips of Jesus the phrase did *not* bear this restricted-meaning, but was intended to apply to every human being, even though he should be one of a hated and despised race, such as were the Samaritans in the estimation of an orthodox Jew.

This summary then of the divine law, adopted by the Founder of the Christian religion and understood as regards its second clause in the universal reference implied by the parable of the Good Samaritan, must be taken at the starting point of any account of Christian ethics. It is evident that it sets before us a view entirely opposed to that which presents morality as a collection of what it is now the fashion with certain writers to call 'taboos.' By this expression such writers mean rules of avoiding particular actions as harmful, not primarily on account of any tendency which may be discovered in them by experience to induce disagreeable consequences, but because they are associated in the established tradition or custom of the community of which we are by birth or breeding members with a peculiar feeling of horror, the converse of that feeling of awe and respect which lies at

\* Deut VI 4, 5, Lev. XIX. 18.

the heart of the religious sentiment. Any rules of avoiding actions which are recognized at all must, for those who follow the teaching of the passage in the Gospel which I have been describing as the foundation of Christian ethics receive all their justification from their tendency to suggest the repression of desires whose satisfaction would be in some way inconsistent with the attitude which Jesus would have his disciples adopt toward God and man respectively. To employ the phraseology used in the third account of the incident found in the New Testament, that contained in the Gospel of Matthew,\* only as 'hanging upon those two commandments,' have the instructions of the 'Law and the Prophets,' that is of the Old Testament in general, any divine authority at all.

It is, no doubt, to be observed—and the actual history of Christian ethics has abundantly illustrated the truth of the observation—that it is possible to bring a very elaborate and detailed system of rules of conduct under the cover, so to say, of the two commandments of love to God and to our neighbour, by the device of representing these rules as prescribed to us by the Being for whom our whole-hearted devotion is claimed in the former of these two commandments. For in that way the keeping of these rules will come to be a prime interest of those who would render to that Being the love which he demands of us, and who can but express their love in a careful fulfilment of whatever it may be revealed to us that he will have us do. Nevertheless, even where this development has taken place, the obligation of the rules is no longer felt to belong to each or any of them in its own right, but simply because it is commanded by a God whom we obey, not from fear of the consequences of disobedience, but from love of him who commands. Love, not fear, is, according to this teaching, to be the motive of our conformity with the rules which express God's Will; and the conception of God as a love-worthy Being, which the whole statement implies, itself suggests that any such rules must themselves rest not upon mere arbitrary caprice, but upon a will in God for the good of

\* XXII 35 ff.

those upon whom the rules are imposed. Those upon whom they are imposed may indeed not always be themselves capable of understanding how their good is to be attained by means of an observance of such rules ; but they may be confident that such a justification of the rules exists and that the knowledge of its nature is rightly to be sought. This is implied in words which Jesus is represented in the Gospel of John\* as addressing to his chosen disciples : “ No longer do I call you servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth ; but I have called you friends , for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you ” The great Christian teacher Augustine, who flourished in the fifth century of the Christian era, lays it down† that the difference between the Law and Gospel is, put shortly, that between *fear* and *love* ; and this has unquestionably been the regular doctrine of the Christian Church ; although, on the one hand, Christian writers have sometimes done injustice to the actual extent to which the pious Israelite or Jew was and is, like the Christian, actuated by love rather than by fear in his relations to God ; and although, on the other hand, a spirit of servile fear, such as, according to the highest Christian teaching, the revelation of God in Christ should have exorcized from Christian souls, has too often prevailed among those who have professed and called themselves Christians.

But there are several problems which present themselves to us when we set ourselves to understand the nature of the principle implied in the doctrine which is the foundation of the Christian theory of ethics, and to estimate the contribution which this doctrine has made or can make to our comprehension of moral obligation and conduct. This doctrine is, as we have seen, the principle that the whole law of God is included in the two commandments of love to God and to our neighbour.

In what sense is it possible to love God ? Can the word ‘ love ’ be used in the same sense when God and when our

\* XV. 15.

† *Contra Admantum*, c. 17 § 2.

neighbour is its object? Can love in any sense be commanded? What is the relation of the love of God prescribed in the first of the two great commandments to the love of our neighbour prescribed in the second? Who (as the lawyer in the Gospel of Luke\* is said to have asked) is my neighbour? What is the self-love implied in the precept to love my neighbour *as myself*, and how far can it be made (as it seems to be made in the second of the two great commandments) the measure of our love to others? To deal adequately with all these questions would require volumes, not half a dozen lectures of an hour apiece. I can only throw out a few thoughts upon each question, which my readers may, if they please, follow up for themselves.

“He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen,” says the writer of what is called the First Epistle of John,† “cannot love God, whom he hath not seen.” It would certainly seem that any ‘love’ which we can feel towards an invisible spiritual Being must be accounted for by the transference to such a Being of emotions originally excited in us by intercourse with our fellow men—with parents or brothers and sisters, with lovers or friends. Yet it may well seem fantastic to expect that such transferred emotions could usually or regularly be stronger than those directed toward a fellow man; nevertheless the first great commandment seems to require no less; for God, according to it, is to be loved with all our soul and mind and strength. Moreover it has been a common Christian doctrine, which can claim strong support from many passages of the New Testament, that our love for our neighbours should rather be rooted in our love for God than our love for God in our love for our neighbour, and this suggests that our love for God is not to be a mere reflection or transference to a remoter object of our love for our neighbour. What conclusion are we to draw from these considerations as to the nature of the love which we may bear to God? Plainly Christian ethics must assign a place of great importance to the love of God, and we cannot be content to

\* X. 29.

† IV. 20.



have no clearer conception than we have yet reached of what we mean by it

- It is beyond question that the doctrine generally held by Christians that Jesus is God Incarnate has enabled them in all ages to envisage the God whom they are commanded to love as a personal Being, having the character and disposition which in the New Testament is ascribed to Jesus. Even by the minority among Christians which has dissented from this view of the Founder of their religion the God whom they have set before themselves as the object of the love enjoined in the first great commandment has been a Being describable in the phraseology of the apostle Paul as ' the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, \* the nature of whose attitude toward us is to be gathered from the teaching of Jesus concerning him whom he called and, as in the parable of the Prodigal Son, vividly pictured as a Father, and from the character of Jesus himself, as being, in the striking words of the same apostle ' the portrait of the invisible God '†

Yet though, in considering the actual contribution made by Christianity to ethics, this important fact must not be overlooked, those to whom Jesus' own summary of the Law was originally addressed cannot be supposed to have been thinking of Jesus himself as the authentic ' portrait ' of the God whom they were bidden to love with all their heart and soul and strength. Moreover, even the designation of ' Father, ' which Jesus seems to have preferred to any other in speaking of God, did not occupy the same central place among the divine titles in the language of the Jews of Jesus' own time as it does for the inheritors of the Christian tradition. The ' love of God ' which the Old Testament writer whose words Jesus accepted as the best statement of God's requirement to be found in the ancient Scriptures of his people, was probably in the mind of that writer himself conceived primarily as a love rather of the kind which one may feel towards one's own country or nation than of that whereof the object is

\* Rom. XC 6, 2 Cor. I 3, XI 31, Eph. I. 3.  
† Col. 1. 15

an individual person. Jehovah or Jahve, the God of the Jews, was to the religious Israelite the spiritual centre of his nation's life, whose will was expressed in its institutions, whose purpose was revealed in its ideals. The love which one entertains towards one's own country or nation may be truly passionate, as the patriotic songs and poems of every land bear witness. To take contemporary instances only, one thinks of *Bande Mataram* or of the devotion to England expressed in many verses of Rudyard Kipling and of Rupert Brooke, or in Cecil Spring Rice's hymn 'I vow to thee, my country'. Moreover, for the original writer of the passage which Jesus quoted, and even for the pious Israelite in the time of Jesus himself, it was easier than it is for us to-day to identify without misgiving his own passionately loved country with the kingdom of the God of the whole world, and his national ideals with the purpose of a righteous God for all mankind. I think then that we should in the first place think of the whole-hearted love of God which is commended to us in the first great commandment rather after the analogy of the passionate devotion which may be felt for a country or a cause than after the analogy of that whose object is a beloved individual; yet, in estimating the contribution of Christianity to the ethics of the world, we must take into account one important consideration. With the very widening of the moral horizon which Christianity brought with it—although we must not forget that some of the greatest prophets and teachers of Israel had already long before the time of Christ anticipated this widening—and with the consequent recognition of the law of God as not the exclusive glory of one's own nation—with this change of outlook the devotion expended on the God who was thought of as personifying the ideals of the community which worshipped him might well have lost the warmth that had belonged to it in ancient Israel, where national and religious sentiments were not distinguished from one another, had not a new and peculiar quality been imparted to it by the belief, which arose among Christians, that the righteous Cause, which in their view was not the cause of one people only but of all mankind, had been perfectly embodied in a supremely

amiable and adorable personality, wherein God had been made flesh \* and dwelt as a man among men.

The love of God described in the first great commandment is then to be understood primarily after the analogy of the love which one may bear to one's country or one's cause ; but in Christianity it is presented with the additional 'warmth and intimacy' (to borrow a phrase from the American philosopher William James) which belongs to what we call a *personal* relation, in consequence of the representation of the right relations between man and God as being those described in the New Testament as existing between Jesus and his heavenly Father, and of the representation of Jesus himself as the Son and 'express image' † of the Father, whose children his disciples, may, through union with him, by adoption become.

On the other hand, the love of our neighbours prescribed in the second great commandment, which is said to be 'like unto' the first, is certainly not just the love which we may have for a friend or brother but plainly cannot have for those whom we do not know or for those with whom we are temperamentally uncongenial. To treat this latter kind of love as the object of a command would be idle. There have been indeed Christian writers who, like Pascal for instance, disparage individual friendship as a merely natural sentiment, which has nothing about it belonging to that higher order of love or 'charity,' in which the bond of association is a common relation to Christ and to God, rather than membership of some family or social group, or mutual physical attraction, or community of tastes. We may think that such writers do less than justice to the value of friendship based upon such grounds as these. Yet it is certainly true that the love of one's neighbour which is enjoined by the Christian law must be regarded as independent of feelings which cannot be commanded, nor can have the wide extension of range contemplated by that law. What that extension is, we find illustrated by the parable of the Good Samaritan, to which I have al-

\* John I. 1, 14

† Heb. I. 3.

ready referred, and expounded in the comment of the apostle Paul, when he writes in his epistle to the Romans :\* Owe no man anything but to love one another ; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself Love worketh no ill to his neighbour ; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law ' For the parable of Jesus and the comment of Paul alike make it clear that the love commanded in the second great commandment is one by no means limited in its range by feelings of personal affection. The love which we are required to entertain towards our neighbour is in fact not what Kant calls ' pathological ' love—meaning by this term not ' morbid ' love (the sense in which we now generally use the word ' pathological ') but *emotional* love This kind of love it would be vain to *command* men to have towards any one The love which we are commanded to have towards our neighbour is rather a *practical* love, that is to say, it consists in the *doing* to all men as we would they would do unto us †

It is thus that the love of our enemies, which is expressly commanded by Jesus,‡ our enemy being included along with our friend under the general head of 'our neighbour,' as that word is to be understood in his summary of our duty, is certainly not to be taken as signifying a feeling of affection toward them, but rather as meaning the will to treat them as though they were not our enemies, and to behave toward them as we should toward our friends or as we would have others behave toward ourselves This inclusion of our enemies among our neighbours is one of the most remarkable features in the moral teaching of Jesus. It was not without reason that the late Rudolf Eucken, one of the spiritual leaders of the last generation in Germany, saw§ in this principle, so impressively

\* XIII 8 ff.

† Matt VII 12, Luke VI 31

‡ Matt V 43 ff Luke VI 27 ff

§ *Der Wahrheitsgestalt der Religion*, 3rd ed (1913), pp 271 ff.; Eng. tr *The Truth of Religion* (1911), pp 391 ff.

laid down by Jesus in what is called his Sermon on the Mount, the decisive proof of a higher order of life present in the world than any to be found there before its announcement, whenever we consider this announcement to have first taken place. It is indeed in this instance of the love of our enemy that we may most usefully study the nature of that love of our neighbour which is required by the Christian law. It is certain, as we have already seen, that it is not an emotional or what Kant calls a 'pathological' love. But is the use of the word 'love' to describe it therefore a mere ambiguity? I think we must not say this. An indifference, such as was encouraged by the Stoic philosophy, to the attacks made by others upon ourselves, which should rest upon a high estimate of our own dignity as above disturbance by such attacks, even though this indifference should be accompanied by a pity for our enemies as mistaken victims of ignorance and folly, is far from being the same with that love of our enemies which is enjoined in the Sermon on the Mount. While we cannot indeed *feel* to order, we can, I believe, recognize the appropriateness of certain feelings to certain relations. For example, we regard a mother's dislike of her child or a brother's aversion to his brother as *unnatural*, and we must, I think, recognize it to be a psychological truth that actions tend to induce the feelings commonly associated with them. Thus when we treat our enemies as if they were friends, basing our behaviour toward them not on the consideration of our own dignity or of their inferiority to ourselves, but on such motives as those suggested by Christianity, of a common brotherhood to Christ and a common sonship to God, we can repress feelings inappropriate to these relations, and can look forward to the rise within us of feelings appropriate to them, welcoming the appearance of such feelings as indications of our having done that which was required of us, namely, to act as we should toward persons in regard to whom such feelings are suitable and usual. Thus all men with whom we have to do—even though they be our private or public enemies—are our 'neighbours' in the sense of the second great commandment laid down by Jesus, though

no doubt not in the sense originally intended by the Old Testament writer whose language he adopted. The 'extension of the area of common good' (to use an expression which I borrow from the English philosopher Thomas Hill Green)\* to the whole human race may I think be fairly claimed as part of the contribution of Christianity to ethics. This is not however to say that Christianity is the sole source of such universalism, even in the west. When the Christian Church came to formulate the principles implicit in the unsystematic teaching of the New Testament, it was the Stoic philosophy which supplied it with a background and framework for its ethics, just as it was the Platonic philosophy which supplied it with a background and framework for its metaphysics. Now the Stoic philosophy had already replaced in the minds of its followers the ancient local patriotisms by the great conception of a common country of all rational beings. 'The poet,' we read in the *Meditations*† of the Stoic emperor Marcus Aurelius, 'says "Dear City of Cecrops"; shall we not say "Dear City of Zeus"?' By the 'City of Cecrops' is here meant Athens, by the 'City of Zeus' the world. But it must be allowed that the thought introduced by Christianity that human beings are united by a common redemption from sin and misery achieved by a sublime act of condescending goodness was better calculated to stir emotion and to incite to action over a wider field of conduct than the thought, which was insisted upon by Stoicism, of their participation in a common reason; though it be nevertheless the fact that it is through their participation in a common reason that men come either to need or to be capable of such a redemption as Christianity proclaims.

In this last sentence I have referred to a feature of Christian ethical teaching which, although it is not explicitly mentioned in the summary of God's law given by Jesus, is nevertheless one which perhaps, beyond all others, gives a distinctive character to the moral temper which that teaching has produced and to which it appeals. I mean the conscious-

\* *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 217.

† iv. 23.

ness of sin, taken together with the promise of the forgiveness of sin. This consciousness colours deeply the whole Christian view of life. Christianity, in the course of its passage through many ages and many lands, has taken many forms, emphasized various aspects of its original message and developed in different ways the implications of that message. But I think it may be truly said that everywhere and in every one of its forms it has emphasized the forgiveness of sins as the great need of man, and as the need which it is itself especially designed to meet. There have been conflicting views held by Christian thinkers as to the account which is to be given of the presence of moral evil in a world which, according to a statement to be found in the Bible\* and accepted on its authority by the generality of Christians, was created "very good" by a good God, and there have also been conflicting views held by Christian theologians as to the methods by which there is imparted to the sinner the forgiveness which is promised to him in the Gospel. Yet, amid all these divergent views all branches of the Christian Church have always been at one in laying stress upon the need of that forgiveness for every man and have regarded it as the chief business of the Church to offer it on behalf of God to individual sinners.

By referring to Jesus' summary of the law as giving us the ruling principle of Christian ethics, I have already called your attention to the fact that Christianity does not deny the lawfulness of self-love. On the contrary our love of self is, according to the second great commandment, to be the standard of our love of our neighbour. 'Thou shalt,' so it runs, 'love thy neighbour *as thyself*.' It is therefore not strictly correct to describe the Christian doctrine of love to our neighbour by the name of *altruism*. This word was introduced into philosophical terminology by the French thinker Auguste Comte and popularised in England by Herbert Spencer. By its derivation, and as opposed to *egoism*, it suggests an opposition between love of others and love of self which is not suggested by the Christian doctrine. That

\* Gen. I. 31.

doctrine does not assert that love of others is opposed to or should supersede love of self. Christianity does not disparage self-love, but places the love of our neighbour on a level with it. The Christian law does not indeed *command* us to love ourselves, for this would be unnecessary; but it *assumes* that we love ourselves and here too it plainly does not mean by the love of self to which it refers that sort which, in the Kantian phrase, is 'pathological' that is to say, emotional. For such self-love varies from man to man, and cannot be assumed so to exist in all alike as to serve for a standard. In its reference to the love of self, it must have in view rather that *practical* pursuit of what is known or thought to be one's own good which is an inalienable feature of normal human life. Nothing however is more characteristic of Christianity than the consciousness of sinfulness. As one of the New Testament writers puts it \* 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' A claim to sinlessness made by any man or woman is at once felt by anyone brought up in a Christian atmosphere to be incompatible, as perhaps nothing else would be, with a Christian attitude to life.

It is of course true that sinlessness is commonly attributed by Christians to Jesus. Critics of orthodox Christianity have objected to this traditional belief of Christians regarding the Founder of their religion on the ground that it cannot be substantiated by the mere absence from the accounts of his life given by his disciples, which are admittedly very fragmentary, of any record of actual sin. But the true basis of this belief is rather to be found in the circumstance that, while a claim to sinlessness in general is apt to be felt by Christians and by persons bred in a Christian atmosphere to be peculiarly repellent, this claim, when made by or for Jesus in the Gospels, is not felt by them to be repellent in this way; and that, while Christianity has always inculcated the 'imitation of Christ' as the duty of a Christian, the imitation thus inculcated has never been *emulation* of him. The Christian aims at

\* 1 John I. 8.



being Christlike, but not at being Christ. Indeed one does not hear of 'Christs' in Christianity as one hears of 'Buddhas' in Buddhism. This difference between the two religions is no doubt not unconnected with the stress laid in Christianity, as is not laid in some other faiths, on the unique and unrepeatable nature of historical fact. It is in any case undeniably true that the imitation of Christ recommended to Christians is not an emulation of him, the absence of any consciousness of sin, even of forgiven sin, in the character of Jesus, as he is represented in the Gospels, is never felt by Christians to be something to which his followers should make it their ambition to attain. Paradoxical as it may appear, the sense of personal sinfulness and need of pardon which among Christians is commonly felt to be essential to a saintly character is experienced by them as the direct consequence of the presentation, as a pattern of conduct, of a life from which, as described in the only records which we have of it, this sense is altogether missing. A character which shows no trace of penitence has thus created an ideal of conduct, of which penitence is so outstanding a feature that even the sense of complete deliverance from sin, as known to Christians, borrows its special note from the consciousness of forgiveness.

We may now sum up what I have had to say about the two great commandments. They enjoin a love toward God and toward man which is a practical, not an emotional or what Kant calls a 'pathological' love; and in the phrase "Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*" it is implied further that the right kind of self-love is of the same description. At the same time the view of the relation of God to man and of man to God on which these commandments are based is such that the behaviour which they enjoin would tend to beget the sentiments appropriate to those relations, sentiments to which the name of 'love' would naturally be applied. As regards one's love of oneself, it is assumed in these commandments that men pursue what they know or think to be their own good; and that what is commanded is that they should treat others on the same principle, with a view to what we know or

think to be *then* good. So far the saying of Kant\* that one should treat humanity, whether in our own person or in that of another, never as a means only, but always as at the same time an end, may be fairly considered as an apt paraphrase of the Gospel precept. Kant's saying, however, does not suggest, what is indeed not explicitly stated in the Gospel precept either, but is among the most deeply rooted convictions of Christian experience—namely that our own person, and therefore that of others, is the person of a *sinner*, whose first need is forgiveness. This conviction tempers the sense of personal dignity, which was strong in Kant as it had been in the Stoics, and which colours the language of his ethical teaching, by importing a sense of personal unworthiness apart from the grace of Another who is at once our neighbour and our God; One whom we see in our neighbour as we see God in him. The ethical mood, if I may so express myself, which is characteristic of Christianity, is one of filial confidence in God as our Father, and of a corresponding brotherliness to all men as God's children; a mood inspired by the peculiarly Christian attitude toward Jesus as the mediator between God and man, possessing by nature a sonship to God which is through him imparted by adoption to others. God may no doubt be regarded as a Father and all men as his children, and so as brethren one of another, apart from any such belief in a son of God by nature, through whom the sonship of other men is mediated; and apart from any belief in Jesus as being this son of God. Yet, as a matter of historical fact, whereof the comparative study of religion must take note, the form which this way of looking at God and at man's relation to God assumes in Christianity is just what it is in consequence of its association with these beliefs, which do not allow those who hold them, while claiming sonship to God, to claim it in their own right, and constrain them to consider the claim as one only to be made when they are saved from sin and reconciled to God by Another than themselves.

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\* *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, Werke* ed Hartenstein, iv p 277; Eng tr, Abbott's *Kant's Theory of Ethics*, p. 47.

### III

#### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

In my last lecture I tried to give an account of the ethical teaching to be found in the New Testament, that is to say, in the written record of that wonderful experience of the manifestation of God in Jesus Christ, which sent those who had enjoyed it out into the world, full of zeal to proclaim to all men the good news of the salvation which they had found, and in so proclaiming it to become the originators of the worldwide movement which we call Christianity. From this subject I now turn to attempt a description of the ideals which that movement first encountered, as from its Jewish cradle it issued first on to the stage of the civilization which we designate, from the names of the two chief peoples who had co-operated in producing it, Graeco-Roman. Within the area to which this civilization extended Christianity became, about three hundred years after the death of its Founder, the dominant religion, profoundly modifying the ideals which it found already in possession by the influence of the traditions which it brought with it. Some among these traditions were common to the whole Jewish race, to which the first preachers of the new faith belonged, while some were peculiar to the small group of Jews which had accepted the claim made for Jesus to be the expected teacher and leader to whose appearance the most earnestly religious of their people had looked forward.

I turn now to the moral ideals of the Greeks. The achievement of this wonderful people in their tiny country with the handful of cities colonized thence, which were scattered around the adjoining coasts of the Mediterranean, during the space of from three to four hundred years, within the spheres of art, literature, science, philosophy and politics, is unsurpassed by that of any others in the history of the world. The Greeks laid the foundations of European civili-

zation and set a standard in thought and in craftsmanship with which the modern world cannot, except at its own peril, dispense. A famous jurist who was once Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, Sir Henry Maine, has said that "except the blind forces of Nature, nothing moves in this world which is not Greek in its origin."\* It is an exaggeration, but a pardonable one. Take Christianity, of which we are now speaking. It is not Greek in its origin. But its work in the world has been done by the instrumentality of a sacred book written in Greek and of a theology fashioned under the influence of the Greek schools of philosophy. Take Indian Nationalism. The civilization of India is not Greek in its origin. Apart from the influence of Greek models upon Indian art in the Buddhist period, it seems to have owed little or nothing to the Greeks. But who can deny that the movement which we call Indian Nationalism draws the inspiration to which it owes its being from an ideal of free citizenship which undoubtedly traces its pedigree to Greece? or that it could not have arisen at all except in an environment created by the practical application of a knowledge of nature gained by a method of disinterested scientific investigation which is not anywhere recorded to have existed independently of the Greek tradition?

Now on turning to consider the ideals of these ancient Greeks and the relation to them of Christianity, I note that Professor Radhakrishnan, in an interesting passage of his work on *Indian Philosophy*† has observed that "in India *Ātmānam viddhi*, 'know the self,' sums up the law and the prophets." The phrase here used at once suggests a contrast between the view of the principle of ethics which the writer regards as characteristically Indian and that which is fundamental in Christianity and which is expressed in the saying of Jesus, as reported in the Gospel of Matthew, that upon the precepts of love to God and to our neighbour "hang all the law and the prophets." Now the moral philosophy of

\* *The Effects of the observation of India on Modern European Thought* (Rede Lecture). See *Village Communities*, ed. 1876, p. 288.

† Vol. I, p. 28.

the Greeks was founded upon a like maxim to that quoted by Professor Radhakrishnan —the maxim ‘know thyself’ which was said to have been divinely revealed as the secret of the conduct of life by the oracle of Delphi. We must observe then how this starting-point of ethics in self-knowledge, common to India and Greece, differs from that which is set before us in the New Testament.

In the first place, it turns the attention *inward*, toward the self, whereas the declaration of Jesus turns it *outward*, away from self, to God and to our neighbour. In the second place, it lays the principal stress on *knowledge*, while the declaration of Jesus lays it on *love*. Now love is probably, from the point of view of psychology, a more fundamental function of the human spirit than knowledge, while some would also regard it as a higher one, since knowledge itself only attains its consummation when it passes into love \*. This latter view is indeed intimately associated with Christianity. In the New Testament the closest union with God is described as dwelling in love, and God himself as love. “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” †. These words recall a text in the *Bhagavadgītā* ‡ “They that worship me with devotion, dwell in me, and I in them”. But the preceding words put into the mouth of Krishna, “there is none whom I hate, none whom I love” strike a different note from that struck by the New Testament writer; and the praise bestowed in the *Gītā* § on the man “whose every motion is void of love and purpose, whose works are burned away in the fire of knowledge” would not be natural in the mouth of a Christian, accustomed to think of love and of a will moved by love as from first to last inseparable from that knowledge in which, under the name of the beatific vision or ‘happy-making sight,’ Christian theologians have been wont to recognize the goal of spiritual endeavour.

\* Cf. Spinoza's *amor Dei intellectualis* (*Eth.* v. 33).

† I John IV 16.

‡ IX. 29

§ IV. 19.

Though the starting point of ethics in the New Testament is thus strikingly different from that suggested by the traditions of both India and Greece, we must not suppose that there has not been found room in Christianity for the quest which is rewarded by finding God within the seeker's self and discovering that this self is rooted in God, or again for the exercise of the intellectual faculties in the exploration of the mysteries of the divine nature. The great achievements of Christian mysticism and of Christian theology show that Christianity by means shrinks from either. So of course, on the other hand, love of God and recognition of his love for us has played, under the name of *bhakti*, a great part in Indian religion. But notwithstanding this, it remains true that, while in Indian religion knowledge of the self as one with God is primary, the fundamental principle of Christian ethics is not the knowledge of self but the love of God and of one's neighbour. It is, however, worth pointing out that it is the teaching which starts with the knowledge of the self that has often ended, as in Sankara's theology, with the denial of genuine reality to the individual self,—sometimes indeed, as in early Buddhism, with a refusal to acknowledge the reality of the self at all; while that which begins with turning away from self to what is, at any rate at first, presented as other than self—to God and to one's neighbour—has issued in that conviction of the permanent reality and value of the individual soul, which constantly in Christian thought resists that tendency to an ultimate and unqualified monism which is never far away where the primacy among the functions of the human spirit is ascribed to knowledge rather than to love.

Now the starting point of Greek ethics was, as I said, that which, according to Professor Radhakrishnan, is the starting point of Indian ethics also, namely *self-knowledge*. It is congruous with this starting point that the leading characteristics of the Greek moral ideal were, I think it would be true to say, in the first place an emphasis on *self-realization*, and secondly a certain *intellectualism* connected with this emphasis, the life of the intellect being envisaged as that in which the

capacity distinguishing the human species from all its animal congeners, and therefore to be regarded as the most properly human capacity, finds its exercise and fulfilment. This same life of the intellect, moreover, was looked upon by the great Greek philosopher Aristotle \* as the only kind of life open to man which he could think of himself as sharing with God, to whom there could be attributed no activity which would require either the possession of a material body or fellows with whom social intercourse could be held; and, on this account also, as the highest life possible to man.

On the other hand, in the outlook of an ancient Roman, it was rather *patriotism*, the life of devotion to one's country, that occupied the central place among the ideals of human conduct. The great Roman poet Virgil was fully aware of the difference in this respect between the ideal of his own people and that of the Greeks, to whom that people owed all their scientific and literary culture. And so we find him † putting into the mouth of the legendary ancestor of the Romans addressing his descendants the famous lines which Dryden has translated as follows:

'arr'

Let others better mould the running mass  
Of metals, and inform the breathing brass,  
And soften into flesh a marble face,  
Plead better at the bar, describe the skies,  
And when the stars descend, and when they rise  
But, Rome, 'tis thine alone with awful sway  
To rule mankind and make the world obey,  
Disposing peace and war thy own majestic way,  
To tame the proud, the fettered slave to free,  
These are imperial arts, and worthy thee

The 'others' whom Virgil has here in view are the Greeks; it is the contrast between the ideals of the Greeks and of the Romans, between the different missions of the two peoples, corresponding to their different ideals, which the poet is expressing. You will observe that in their intellectualism, their high estimation of science and art, the Greeks have the

\* *Eth. Nic.* X. 7

† *Aen.* VI 847 ff.

wider outlook, as being unconcerned with the distinction between one nation and another, except, so far as one nation may differ from another in capacity for that life of intellectual culture which they so highly prized. But you will also observe that the Roman outlook is associated with the sense of a *mission* to bring peace and good government to the world at large which is less *individualistic* than the Greek emphasis on the pursuit of truth and beauty. For truth and beauty, although they no doubt adorn and dignify the life of a society in which they are cultivated, must always be pursued rather by *individuals* working by themselves than by the community acting as a unit made up of many individuals.

Now the ideals of the Jewish nation, to which the Founder and first preachers of Christianity belonged, were in several respects different from those alike of the Greeks and of the Romans. The Jewish people set great store by the knowledge of God; but the knowledge of God that they meant was not what we may call a scientific understanding of the divine nature, such as was sought by the Greek philosophers, but rather a practical acquaintance with God's will for us, the vocation which he would have us fulfil, the law which he would have us keep, and not only keep but love and rejoice to keep. Again, the ideal of the Jews was, like that of the Romans, patriotic, but with a difference. The very diverse historical fates of the two nations are reflected in this difference. The Roman State had, from being the community of a small settlement of warlike shepherds and farmers, become a mighty empire, and the ancient forms of worship which they had practised toward the spirits whom they imagined as presiding over the various occupations and crises of the community's life were preserved as the most venerable feature of the constitution of the empire which had grown from such small beginnings. They were observed and sometimes used for their own political purposes by men who scarcely pretended to believe in the real existence of the gods whom they addressed or in the efficacy of the ceremonies which they performed; although the same men might not scruple to insist upon others respecting and observing the customs of a religion which had become



to them an adjunct of their patriotism. The Jews, on the other hand, so far from attaining, like the Romans, to political supremacy in the world that they knew, had, at an early stage of their national career, lost their political independence and passed under the government or protection of one empire after another, until they, like the other peoples of the basin of the Mediterranean Sea, came to be included within the Roman empire. But, while losing their political independence, they had retained their religion, and had not only retained it, but come to cling to it as the one bond that held together their scattered communities, under whatever political conditions they might be living. Thus we may say that Roman religion came to be patriotic, Jewish patriotism to be religious. It was in loyalty to their religion that the patriotism of the Jews found its expression, while with the Romans it was to their political institutions that their patriotism primarily attached itself, institutions to which the State religion was on the whole regarded in the main as a venerable adjunct.

To the features of the Jewish ideal of which I have spoken, its care for a knowledge of God which was rather of a practical than a speculative, of a moral than a philosophical character, and its religious patriotism, must be added its religious exclusiveness. The Jews, alone of the nations under Roman sway, would not meet half-way the comprehensive hospitality which the Roman religion was ready to extend to the deities of the peoples whom Rome had subdued. The first commandment of the Jewish God forbade his worshippers to have any God beside himself; and, while not alone in believing that there was but one supreme God, the Jews were alone in refusing to see in other people's supreme deities aliases of their own God. These were to the Jews no more than idols; and to worship them was not in their eyes merely to venerate the true God under another name, but to commit what they regarded as the supreme sin of spiritual adultery; since they thought of their own nation as the chosen bride of their God, who would not suffer it to admit any husband beside himself.

From the ideals of these peoples whose life formed the social background of Christianity in its earliest days,—the

Jewish, wherein it arose, and the two which dominated the world in which it found itself, the Greek, to which that world was indebted for its culture, and the Roman, which had created its political system—I now turn to the ideal of primitive Christianity itself, and will attempt to indicate its relation to each of the ideals which I have just been describing. In the first place, then, the early Christians carried on the tradition of their Jewish forefathers, and differed from the Greeks in setting little store by knowledge obtained through the scientific exploration of nature or through philosophical speculation on the nature of ultimate reality. That the pursuit of such knowledge was not incompatible with Christianity the future was to prove, but undoubtedly it was not highly valued by the first Christians in comparison with the kind of knowledge which, as I have already pointed out, was the kind of knowledge valued by the Jews, knowledge of God's will for us. But here too there was a difference. The Jews, believing that this will of God was revealed in their Scriptures, tended to exalt the class of scholars whose familiarity with these Scriptures gave them the right to dictate to the ignorant. But even this sort of knowledge, which could be confined to a special learned class, is depreciated in the New Testament in comparison with that which is within the reach of the simplest person who is pure in heart. Thus we find it recorded that Jesus said 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes, even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight' '\* There have been, during the long history of Christianity, not a few instances in which learned theologians have looked down upon simple folk as further away than themselves from that knowledge of God which is salvation, but in view of such words as I have quoted they could only do so by ignoring the plain meaning of teaching which they must have acknowledged as coming from God.

We saw that if what we may call *intellectualism*, emphasis, that is, on the supreme value of such knowledge as we

\* *Matth. XI. 25 f.*

have in science and philosophy, was the outstanding characteristic of the Greek ideal, *patriotism* was the outstanding characteristic of the Roman. How did early Christianity stand in this respect? Once more we shall find it in line with Jewish tradition; yet here too, even more strikingly than in the matter of *knowledge*, innovating upon that tradition in an important respect. We must remember that the patriotism of the Jew at the time of the rise of the Christian religion was a *religious* patriotism; that it was his religion which distinguished his people everywhere from others, and constituted the bond of unity among scattered groups of Jews to be found everywhere throughout the Roman empire and even beyond its limits; for there were Jewish settlements, for example, in this land of India, to which the Roman arms never penetrated. Now Christianity took over from Judaism the conviction that the essential principle which held together the society which was to command the deepest and most permanent loyalty must be a common relation to its God. But Christians did not regard their relation to their God after the Jewish fashion, as one which was only open to those in whose veins ran the blood of Abraham or who were adopted into his family by the blood-rite of circumcision; they held it to have been thrown open to every child of man. Although the preaching of Jesus himself had been limited to his fellow countrymen, and he is even related to have said\* that he was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, his followers very soon felt that there was nothing in his teaching to confine it to Jews; they soon found that men not of Jewish race showed clear evidence of sharing as fully as any others that new spiritual life of which they were conscious in themselves; and declared that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him."† From the early history of Christianity it is clear that this transference of the patriotic sentiment from the Jewish nation

\* Matt. XV. 24.

† Acts. X. 35.

to a spiritual community not based on race at all, constituted its great offence in the minds of those around it. From neither Jew nor Gentile (to use the word which the Jews themselves used of all others than themselves) could Christians expect sympathy here. The Jew was apt to resent the assertion that what he took to be his own spiritual privileges were thrown open to the Gentiles; the Gentile might have welcomed a Jew who should simply have laid aside his national peculiarities and adopted the civilization of his neighbours, but he could not sympathize with a Jew who only cast off his allegiance to his own tribe in order to maintain it to a Master who was after all only a Jewish heretic, and to the society of his followers, who by their maintenance of the notions of God and the standard of moral conduct which they derived from Judaism on the one hand, and on the other by their indifference to the cultural traditions and political institutions of the Graeco-Roman world, remained strangers in that world while ceasing to be at home in the narrower fellowship of Judaism itself.

Although they did not deny the divine origin of the Jewish polity, the Christians came to think of its institutions as the now superseded types or figures of relations to God which they themselves enjoyed in their spiritual reality; and thus they could not regard them as permanent even for born Jews, still less as necessarily to be imposed on Gentile converts to Christianity; while to those converts and their descendants, who soon came to constitute a majority of Christians, the Jewish institutions had of course never been objects of patriotic attachment at all. Nor, when the Christian Church emerged from its original Jewish surroundings on to the wider stage of the Graeco-Roman civilization, did the institutions of the Roman empire, in which that civilization had found its political expression, awaken at first any sentiment of loyalty in its members. The Jewish attitude of hostility towards all gods but their own, which they retained to the full, forbade them to join in that worship of the Emperor which had become the symbol of loyalty to the Empire; and the refusal of this worship was bound to be interpreted as a

token of disloyalty by people to whom the notion of such conscientious religious nonconformity was new and unintelligible. It was indeed truly pointed out by the Christian Apologists who wrote in defence of their religion that, though they could not consent to pray to the Emperor or to worship him as God, they did in their worship of their own God pray for the Emperor and for the government of which he was the head. They held it to be their duty to pray for those who were by God's Providence set in authority over them; and they could perform the duty with perfect sincerity, since they knew themselves to be often secured by the protection of the government against popular attack—for it was comparatively rarely in earlier times that they were persecuted by the government itself. It was moreover their opinion that the existence of the Empire was keeping at bay a great outbreak of anti-Christian violence which they expected to precede the catastrophe of the end of the world, a catastrophe which they mistakenly believed to be imminent\*. But, though they might and did thus pray for the welfare of the State under whose rule they lived, they did not cultivate such a sentiment of genuine loyalty for it as would satisfy those by whom there was nothing to be looked for more desirable than its continuance in prosperity and power; in their eyes it belonged to an order of things which was destined to pass away; they felt their own citizenship to be elsewhere, in "a better country, that is a heavenly,"† in an everlasting "city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God"‡

The absence from the primitive Christian ideal of the intellectualism, the disinterested love of knowledge, which distinguished that of the Greeks, and also of the patriotism which had (with the difference due to the different histories of the two peoples) been a conspicuous feature in both that of the Romans and that of the Jews, was yet not without its compensation. It qualified Christianity to assist, as it might not otherwise have assisted, in that enlargement of the 'area' of

\* Cf. 2 Thess II 7

† Heb XI 16

‡ Heb XI 10.

common good ' (to use a phrase of Green's quoted before) which was characteristic of the period in which it arose. For it allowed of the expression of a practical sympathy with many who could expect little from those who, though, like the Stoics, they believed in a universal fellowship, found the basis of such a fellowship in knowledge and culture; and it allowed also of a sympathy in principle with all men, irrespective even of their inclusion in the political system which aimed—for so the Roman system aimed—at embracing the whole world within its scope

Beside this absence of intellectualism and of patriotism from the primitive Christian ideal, there is another negative characteristic of that ideal which must not be overlooked in any study of the contribution of Christianity to ethics. I mean the absence from it of *self-complacency* of any kind. In the gallery of figures exhibiting praiseworthy qualities which is set before us in the *Nicomachean Ethics* of the Greek philosopher Aristotle we find conspicuous that of the great-souled or magnanimous man who counts himself worthy of the highest honour, being in truth worthy of it \*. We read again in the Bible† of a Jewish worthy and his wife who "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Such a claim to honour for oneself could never be made, such a consciousness of blamelessness in God's sight could never be admitted by a Christian without serious misgiving. The attitude which is characteristically Christian is that enjoined in a saying attributed to Jesus himself, "When ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which it was our duty to do"‡. This is the attitude which is meant when humility is said to be a Christian virtue. It is sometimes said that Christianity in elevating humility to the rank of a virtue was entirely original; that in the older codes of conduct, whether Greek or Jewish, which it found

\* *Eth Nic* IV 3.

† *Luko* I 6.

‡ *Luke* XVII. 10.

in possession, humility did not hold that rank. This however can only be said with some qualification. The Jews might read in their Scriptures the famous saying of the prophet Micah that Jehovah required of a man that he should "walk humbly with his God"\* and the religion of the "poor in spirit," the "meek and lowly in heart" which carried blessing and encouragement from Jesus,† had before his time found expression in many of the Psalms; and to these illustrations of it parallels have been found in inscriptions of older date from Babylonia and Egypt, countries whose civilization profoundly influenced Jewish tradition. Again, the wisdom of not provoking by arrogance the divine jealousy to bring down one's high looks was a constant theme of Greek moralizing, and that boastfulness and self-assertion are bad manners is taken by Aristotle‡ to be well understood among well-bred men. Yet, when all these things have been noted, it remains true that a greater stress is laid upon humility by Christianity than by the ethical systems of the Greeks and the Jews. It is something more important in Christian eyes than good manners, and it is held to be none the less required that the Christian God, like the Creator in the *Timæus* of Plato § and unlike the older deities of Greece, is conceived as a Being of ungrudging goodness and love, who does not look with an envious eye on human prosperity; it is moreover to be exercised not only towards God but towards our fellow men; and to be in a sense the central grace of the Christian life.

We have now defined the Christian ideal by contrast with others, which it found recognized in the world wherein the Christian religion first appeared, as not intellectualistic, nor patriotic, nor exclusive. We have also noticed the aversion to anything like self-complacency which is connected with these negative characteristics. Instead of self-complacency we find as a feature of the temper which it

\* Micah VI 8

† Matt V 8, XI 29

‡ Eth Nic IV. 7

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encouraged a certain cheerfulness and serenity which is intimately associated with the humility of which I have spoken as emphasized by Christianity. For the anxiety which is necessarily attendant on the attempt to make oneself a perfect specimen, whether of a cultured citizen, a rigorous observer of ceremonial propriety, or a sage whose wants are reduced to a minimum, is inconsistent with the conviction that, however much one may accomplish, one is still an unprofitable servant. It is inconsistent with the faith that one's deliverance from the burden of a sinful nature does not depend upon any achievement due to one's own efforts but upon the love and grace of Another, that what is demanded of one is not a perfect performance, but a surrender of one's will. It would be idle to deny that the history of Christianity affords many instances of Christians indulging in spiritual ambitions of the kind which I have indicated as being discouraged by Christianity; but I do not think that any one can reasonably gainsay the statement that the fundamental principles of Christian ethics are such as must, when they are carried out, induce a temper adverse to such indulgence. There has been among Christians again much insistence on rules of conduct, much care for propriety of ritual, much absorption in pious sentiment and enthusiastic devotion, but none of these religious phenomena are distinctive of Christianity; they are common to all or most religious systems. It was by insistence on purity not only in deed but in thought, on God's requirement of a worship "in spirit and in truth"\* rather than on correct ceremonial, on a type of moral excellence which sought its inspiration in the teaching and example of Jesus, that Christianity was recognized as differentiating itself from notions widely though not universally prevalent in the world to which it was first preached, of the nature of the life which was most acceptable to God and most worthy of man.

We have been attempting to discriminate the ideal of Christianity as it appeared on the stage of history over against the ideals embodied in the religious and social system of the



Jews, in which its Founder and first teachers had been bred ; those expressed in the philosophy and science of the Greeks whose culture at that time dominated the higher life of the nations inhabiting the shores of the Mediterranean , and those which were reflected in the political institutions of the Roman empire to the government of which those same nations were subject . In doing this we have however come in sight not merely of negative features—its reaction against the supreme importance attached by Roman, Greek and Jew to political loyalty , to the pursuit of knowledge, and the observance of religious law respectively—but of the positive characteristics in which these negative features were rooted . The chief of these we may describe as being an unrestricted sympathy with the poor, the ignorant, and the alien , an ethical inwardness issuing at once in the humility belonging to those who do not value themselves on a personal achievement that must always fall short of the standard proposed to them , and a cheerfulness, a freedom from anxiety, due to confidence that one is accepted not because of one's own accomplishment but because of the grace of Another in whom one trusts , a confidence able to turn the sinner's thoughts away from his own recognized imperfections to the goodness which by an unmerited communication to him of the divine life, has been made his own . This confidence again finds its ultimate justification in the peculiar turn given by Christianity to the notion of sonship to God, a notion which was shared with it in some measure by several of the other systems of religion with which it was at its first appearance in contact . For the Christian regarded himself as a son of God not merely because, like the rest of the world, he owed his origin to the creative power of God, nor even merely as sharing in the divine reason—though this might be a necessary condition of the very intimate relation which he did regard himself as bearing to God—nor again, after the fashion of the Jew, on the ground of belonging to a nation which God had chosen as the object of his special care . He regarded himself as a son of God in virtue of his capacity, through his spiritual union with a person who was God's son

by nature, to claim a sonship by *adoption*, an adoption due not to his own individual merit but to the grace of Another, and open not to the members of one nation only, but to every child of man. Nothing is more characteristic of the Christian attitude towards God than the mixture of familiarity and humility which is directly traceable to this conception of a relation to God at once so near and so undeserved, so intimate and yet at the same time so accessible to all.

Christianity has shown itself in the course of its history able to inspire philosophical thought, artistic imagination, political genius, but its characteristic ethical ideals have from the first borne the stamp of its origin in the spiritual life of a people which among the peoples of the world was remarkable for none of these things, but was remarkable for a sense of God, not so much under the aspect of the ultimate unity within and behind the manifold phenomena of nature and of life as under the aspect of a living Providence controlling and directing to the fulfilment of a single purpose the history of the world, and the Author of a law of conduct for men, in their loyal adherence to which lay their true happiness in the present and their ground of hope for the future.

The influence of Christianity on ideals of conduct, its contribution to the ethics of humanity cannot be understood except by reference to this emphasis which it inherits from Judaism on the revelation of God in history and in morality. In its conception of this revelation it has modified the tradition which it received. While recognizing the special mission which had been entrusted to Israel in that history, it has not looked upon the triumph of that nation as the goal of the whole process, and has followed some of the greatest of the prophets of Israel itself in regarding other nations as in like manner having, no less than Israel, their own special missions to perform in the divine scheme. It has thus made it impossible for its adherents to identify the spiritual unity of mankind with the institutions of any one nation or group of nations; or, in other words, to identify Church with State. Again, while the general estimate of moral values to which Christianity has

given currency is unquestionably more closely allied to that suggested by the Jewish Scriptures than that, for example, which we associate with the Greeks or Romans, yet it has, in accordance with the express teaching of its Founder,\* recognized in works of charity or love to our fellow men rather than in the observance of a code of legal and ritual ordinances the substance of the divine law. It is an instructive historical fact that when, soon after Christianity had become the dominant religion in the Roman Empire, the Emperor Julian attempted to revive the worship of the gods whom his non-Christian predecessors had acknowledged, he was obliged to incorporate into his scheme two features of that Christian system which it was intended to replace—the independence of the priesthood, in its own sphere of religion, upon the civil authority, and the provision of relief for the sick and needy. For these were features which had been lacking in the pre-Christian tradition which he was endeavouring to quicken to new life, but also features without which no religion could, as he saw, meet the needs of a generation which had on the one hand become acquainted with the example set by the Christian saints and martyrs of conscientious refusal to make religious considerations subservient to political; and which was on the other hand familiar with that systematic care for the suffering and the poor which had from the first constituted so large a part of the activity of the Christian community.

My next lecture will deal with the effect upon Christian ideals of what may be regarded as a return upon them of elements which were present in the moral ideals of the civilisation wherein it had become the dominant religion, but which it had at first neglected; *viz.*, the *intellectualism*, if I may so call it, characteristic of the Greek, and the *patriotism* characteristic of the Roman conception of the highest human life.

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\* See Matt. XXV. 31 ff

## IV.

### CHRISTIANITY AND EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION

Passing from the consideration of the ethics of Christianity as they confronted the Graeco-Roman world on their first appearance I shall in the present Lecture direct my readers' attention to some salient features in the later history of the civilization which arose on the foundations laid by Greeks and Romans and which looked for religious and moral guidance to the authorized teachers and representatives of Christianity, illustrative of the ideals recognised and, however imperfectly and intermittently, acted upon therein. As I intimated at the end of the last Lecture, we shall have to observe the return to power of the *intellectualism* and the *patriotism* which had seemed at first to be lacking to the ideal proposed by Christianity when contrasted with those held in honour among the Greeks and Romans who had laid the foundations of European civilization. We shall see that this return resulted in a modification of the original ideals of Christianity which was in part an enrichment, but also in part an adulteration and weakening of their purity. We shall have further to remark a certain bifurcation, if I may so express it, of the Christian ideal of life, which found external expression in the division of the Western Church into Catholic and Protestant at what is usually called the Reformation in the sixteenth century of the Christian era. Lastly we shall have to comment upon the significance of the rise in the bosom of Christendom, that is to say, of the group of nations professing Christianity, of a tendency to adopt an outlook purely secular and irreligious, which has gone hand in hand with an immense advance in their knowledge of the material world and consequent ability to exploit it for the use and convenience of mankind. I shall attempt to show that this tendency, which has, as I said, come to manifest itself first among nations professing

Christianity, cannot continue unchecked without serious danger to elements in human life which are of supreme value and which it is the special function of religion, whether in the form of Christianity or in any other form, to produce and to cultivate

We saw that, in the earlier stages of its history, Christianity exhibited little of that love of knowledge for its own sake, that delight in the pursuit of it as being the activity most distinctive of humanity and as constituting its peculiar dignity, which had been a marked characteristic of the Greeks, the people whose culture was the basis of the civilization then existing on the shores of the Mediterranean. But Christianity could not become the religion of a people imbued with this spirit of inquiry, this disinterested love of knowledge, without being affected thereby. The doctrines of the Christian religion itself were of a nature to afford a congenial exercise to intellects trained in the practice of speculation, and many took full advantage of the opportunity thus offered them. Thus there arose in the Christendom of the centuries which followed upon the first introduction of Christianity to the Greeks what may be called a new intellectualism in the form of what came to be called *orthodoxy*, which on the one hand was strange to the traditions of ancient Greece before its conversion to Christianity, and on the other hand stood in marked contrast with the view taken of Christianity by its original Jewish adherents as a practical and personal attitude toward God issuing in a certain way of life rather than as a system of doctrines propounded to the scientific understanding. I shall attempt to describe in a little more detail what I mean by this supposed virtue of *orthodoxy*, and then endeavour to show that, while in this form it cannot be reckoned a permanent constituent of the moral ideal, it has made a certain contribution thereto.

The root of this conception of *orthodoxy* would appear to be three-fold. There is, first, the store set by that knowledge of God of which I spoke in my last Lecture as being so highly prized by the Jews; not a scientific understanding of

the divine nature but a practical acquaintance with God's will for us. Secondly there is the close association of this knowledge of God in Christianity itself with a particular historical context, with the events, that is to say, of the life of Jesus, in which God was held by Christians to have revealed himself in an unique and supreme fashion. Thirdly there is the Greek love of intellectual speculation, fastening upon this revelation, and working out with the utmost subtlety its logical consequences and metaphysical implications.

What we have chiefly to observe is that the knowledge of God which I have described as a practical acquaintance with God's will for us implies a moral quality in its possessor. As a man's choice of his friends and of his occupation is an index of his moral character, being determined by his sympathies and his intuitions of what is good and desirable, so with the love of God and of his law, which is what the Israelite meant and the Christian followed him in meaning by 'the knowledge of God'. As Jesus himself said of the satisfaction of that love, it is only the pure in heart that are blessed by the vision of God \*. Thus the thought arises of a moral quality belonging to the knowledge of God in this sense of the phrase, which is afterwards almost insensibly transferred to a very different kind of knowledge of God, the assent namely to propositions about God which can only be understood by the application of the scientific understanding to the data of revelation. Had the moral quality, however, thus transferred from the one kind of knowledge of God to the other, been attached, in the minds of the Christians who were led to make this transference, to the active exercise of thought by the scientific intelligence upon the problems suggested by their religious experience of a divine revelation, the resulting intellectualism would have been of the same kind with that of the ancient Greeks; but it would have been in flagrant contradiction with the tradition of Christianity whose Founder, we read in a passage which I quoted in an

\* Matt. V. 8.

earlier Lecture, thanked God that he had hidden his mysteries from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes \* But this was not the case. Christians might indeed admire the intellectual gifts of their great theologians, but they did not regard their intellectual activity as morally virtuous, except in the sense that any man's diligence and industry in his vocation, whether that vocation be a scholar's or a day-labourer's, is morally virtuous. What they *did* regard as morally virtuous was the resolute adherence by Christians, whether learned or unlearned, to what they held to be truth revealed by God. When any explanation or definition of this truth propounded by theologians had been accepted by the Church as expressing what it had always believed, then to hold fast to this explanation or definition was regarded as morally virtuous, and simple people, not understanding anything of the matter except that the authority which they revered had taught them thus, and so not tempted to go further in criticism, were obviously more likely to exhibit this virtue than better educated and able men, whose interest in the problems might lead them to question the solutions offered to them. Thus the moral quality properly belonging to the practical knowledge of God which is manifested in loving worship of him and in willing obedience to his law is transferred to a reception, on authority, of statements about him which it is supposed that he has revealed and therefore would have us show our dutiful loyalty to him by believing.

It is necessary at this point to notice that there is, not only historically but in principle, a close connection between this high estimate of the value of orthodoxy and the practice of religious persecution. This practice, which has disfigured the record of many creeds, has often brought deserved discredit on the behaviour of Christians not only to the followers of other religions but to fellow-Christians who have differed from themselves in doctrine or ritual. The belief that nothing is more acceptable to God than implicit acquiescence in whatever

\* Matt XI 25.

he is pleased to reveal had enabled men of high moral excellence in other respects to believe that they were only doing their duty to their neighbours in their utmost efforts to diminish as far as possible and at any cost the number of those declining such acquiescence; a purpose which is no doubt promoted by a severity of treatment which will discourage all but the most convinced from persisting in their dissent, and by extirpating the persistently obstinate put it out of their power to persuade others to join them in their rejection of what is conceived to be divinely imparted truth. But it has always been difficult or impossible to reconcile the temper which these principles demand with one which will strike most men as appropriate to the charity or love which the New Testament exalts as the chief and parent of all virtues.

Now if we examine most closely the conception of orthodoxy which I have been attempting to describe, I think that we shall find involved in it various elements of differing value. We shall have to recognize that there is nothing to condemn in the exercise of the critical intelligence upon the data of divine revelation or of religious experience. Such use of our highest faculties upon the highest subjects is wholly legitimate and indeed inevitable. In suggesting then that there has been attributed to orthodoxy a moral value which it does not possess, I am not in the least intending to deny a place to scientific theology among the worthy objects of human interest. Nor again, in pointing out that the virtue of orthodoxy has generally been held to lie in the docile acceptance and resolute maintenance of supposed truths which have been received on what is held to be divine authority, and that this is something very different from the free and unfettered employment of our reason in the attempt to solve the problems which our experience sets us, do I intend to deny that there is a place in human life for the recognition of the authority of wisdom and goodness greater than our own, and for willing surrender to its guidance. Nevertheless I think that in the emphasis on the supreme value of orthodoxy which has at certain times and in certain places been laid by Christian



teachers there is a confusion of the excellence which really belongs to a loyal adhesion to the best that we know with the approval of unquestioning zeal in defence of doctrinal formulas which convey to their defenders' minds no distinct meaning at all but are supposed to be bound up with convictions entertained on quite other grounds than that of their intellectual cogency. And, when all allowance has been made for the consideration that those who laid this great stress on the importance of assent to propositions, which those assenting could hardly be supposed to understand, were often right in thinking that convictions expressed by these propositions were really intimately associated with the moral and spiritual life of the community which had adopted them, it cannot be denied that this emphasis on orthodox forms of statement, by encouraging intolerance and persecution and thrusting into the background as tests of religion those good works of charity to others, which in the New Testament we find Jesus himself representing\* as those by the performance or omission of which a man is to be judged at the last, led to results such as to make us disposed to think that the emphasis itself was mistaken, and that orthodoxy itself is, *in this form*, no part of the permanent contribution of Christianity to ethics. Yet we should be in my judgment mistaken if we did not acknowledge that it has made a certain contribution thereto. For the high value set upon orthodoxy by Christians in the past was closely connected with a readiness to die for their faith which, though it has by no means been found only among Christians, was strange to the traditions of ancient Greece and Rome. This martyr-spirit is then a contribution to ethics; it has sometimes been shown in later times by men who died at the hands of Christians for a faith which was not theirs; but such men have been displaying a virtue in the practice of which the early Christians had led the way.

I said above that in this Lecture I should call attention not only to a reappearance among the ideals of Christendom.

though in a form different from that in which it characterized the ideal of the ancient Greeks, of that *intellectualism* which it had at first seemed to exclude; but also of a similar revival of that *patriotism* which was so important a feature of the ideals of all the peoples with which Christianity was first in contact, and the absence of which from that of Christians in the earliest stages of Christian history did more than anything to render Christianity unpopular, first with the ruling class among the Jews, and afterwards with the government and upper classes of the Roman empire.

It must be remembered that for a long time Christianity was, with a few rare exceptions, actually confined to the territories of that empire. Even if, for example, the traditions be true (as my lamented friend Dr Farquhar came to think possible)\* which affirm that the first Christian Church in India originated in the days of the Apostles, this and perhaps some other small communities of Christians established outside of the Roman dominions were too remote from the great centres of Christian activity and not sufficiently numerous to hinder it from being natural that, when once the Christian religion had been adopted as the official religion of the Roman empire, loyalty to Christianity and patriotic attachment to the institutions of that empire should come to go together, as they scarcely could have gone together, so long as Christians were liable to be declared traitors to the empire and persecuted as such. Still, since the Roman empire dominated the whole world with which it was concerned, a patriotic sentiment for its institutions did not so much affect the claim of Christianity to be a universal religion intended for all mankind and not (like most religions of earlier days) the religion of some one nation or people, as did the rise later on, when the Roman empire began to break up, of various and mutually hostile nationalities within the world over which the Christian religion had spread. To deal with this movement and its

\* *The Apostle Thomas in North India* Manchester 1926, and *The Apostle Thomas in South India* Manchester 1927. (*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* Vol. 10, No 1 and Vol. 11, No 1)

consequences would be to tell the history of the European Middle Ages. But we may notice that Christianity affected and was affected by the emergence of nationality as a political factor in two ways — one characteristic of the Eastern part of Christendom, the other of the Western. In the Eastern part of Christendom it often happened that the spirit of nationality took advantage, so to say, of the theological disputes which the high value set upon orthodoxy, of which I have already spoken, had made so important, and particular nationalities embraced particular theological opinions and so gave to their national differences the appearance of being differences of opinion as to the correct view of the Christian revelation. In the Western part of Christendom the rise of the Roman bishops or popes to a position of acknowledged supremacy in ecclesiastical matters gave real effect to the claim of Christianity to be the religion of no particular nation and to transcend national distinctions. It was a consequence of this state of affairs that, as the peoples of Europe came to maturity as nations, they felt the international organization of the Church under the popes to be a hindrance to the attainment of full national independence, and this was the principal reason of the breaking away of certain Christian nations from the unity of the Catholic or universal Church at what is called the Reformation in the sixteenth century. Where this happened, the Christian Church in each such nation was reorganised on a national basis, and, though in theory Christianity was held to transcend national distinctions, it became easy in practice for men to regard then Christianity as a national religion, separating them from other nations whose religion was either not Christian at all or not what they came to feel was the best or even the only genuine sort of Christianity. The check which Christianity had at first placed on any tendency to consider the welfare of the State as the supreme rule of moral conduct was thus to a large extent removed, and much of the gain which had accrued to the Western world through the adoption of Christianity was lost. The Great War which ended twelve years ago did but reveal on a vast and terrible

scale the issues of the development which had been taking place during the preceding centuries, in which nationalism had been steadily growing and the sense of religious unity among the nations professing Christianity proportionately declining.

For the sentiment of nationality, indeed, Christian morality could as easily find room as for that of loyalty to one's parents or family. That neither could constitute an *absolute* claim on a man's conscience was an essential part of its teaching. The circumstances of the life of Jesus did not call forth from him any express statement concerning the sentiment of national patriotism. He taught his disciples to pay the taxes imposed by the state of whose organisation they were content to avail themselves,\* he directed them to be ready to do more than was asked of them in performing public services;† but the State to which these savings referred was the Roman empire, which to his own Jewish countrymen was a foreign government. When he wept‡ over the Jerusalem that had rejected him, he gave vent to a truly patriotic sentiment toward the sacred city of his people. But, as I said, the circumstances of his life did not bring him into the same close contact with the claims of national patriotism as they did with those of domestic duty. As to these, his teaching was clear. To honour father and mother was a duty of divine institution with which no such self-imposed undertaking as that of a religious vow could dispense a man from the obligation to perform.§ Yet at the call of God one must leave father and mother and if need be act as though one hated them || The same principle—the recognition of the duty as genuine and as sacred but not as absolute—which was thus applied to that which we owe to our parents can be readily applied to that which we owe to our country.

\* Mark XII. 13 ff

† Matt V 41

‡ Luke XIX 41 ff

§ Mark VII. 9 ff

|| Luke XIV. 26.

Now for many centuries the Christian Church set before its members a two-fold standard of duty. It recognized the ordinary duties of society—domestic, economic, municipal, civil—as those in which the generality of Christians were to find the means of displaying that love of God and their neighbour in which, as we saw in the second Lecture, the whole law of good conduct was summed up. But it also recognized a special call to certain persons to retire from the society which was occupied in the discharge of functions necessary to human life in the world, to remain unmarried, to possess no private property, to live under special rules of discipline, and thereby to set visibly before the eyes of men the possibility of a call to abandon the ordinary pursuits of men for the sake of a more intimate converse with God. Such persons were called in a technical sense ‘religious,’ and institutions, monasteries of men and women, were established to facilitate the living of such a life. When speaking before of the ideal of orthodoxy, I pointed out that Christianity did not encourage the belief that intellectual speculation, even about the data of revelation, placed those who engaged in it in a higher spiritual position than their less learned or less mentally active brethren. Some of the early heretics—those who are called Gnostics from *gnosis*, the Greek word for knowledge—had recognized a religious aristocracy of men who understood the inner meaning of doctrines of which the mass of believers only knew the external symbols. But this pretension was repudiated by the great body of Christians. In the matter of conduct, however, a much nearer approach was made to the establishment of two standards, a higher and a lower—one for those who were content to obey the *precepts* of the Gospel which were supposed to be binding upon all; another for those who had bound themselves to observe what were called the *counsels* of perfection—celibacy, poverty, obedience. It was not indeed taught that those who observed the counsels, the monks and the nuns, were necessarily better than those who made no pretence of doing so. Still the life of those who were pledged to this greater strictness was

regarded as in general as giving those who lived it a better *chance* of pleasing God ; and it was no accident that the proportion of monks and nuns among those officially declared to be saints was very large.

Now this recognition of a double standard of morality was one of the points, perhaps the most important point, on which the Protestant interpretation of Christianity diverged from the Catholic. We saw before that the Reformation as it is called, was in large measure brought about by impatience on the part of some European nations of the claims of the Roman bishops or popes, as heads of the supra-national organisation of the Christian Church, to over-ride national authorities. This desire for national independence in religion went naturally along with an assertion that the career of a good citizen taking part in the domestic, economic, and political life of the society around him was quite as favourable an opportunity for showing oneself a good Christian as that of a monk in his cloister or a hermit in his cell. And the fact that the monastic societies were in practice under the immediate orders of the popes brought it about that in the countries that accepted the Reformation and rejected the papal authority the monastic institutions were abolished, as bound up both with the idea of a double standard in morality and with the recognition of the supra-national jurisdiction of the bishops of Rome.

It is by no means my intention to enlarge upon the controversies which exist between the several Churches of Christendom about the position of the Bishops of Rome and other points connected with the organisation of the religious life. To some of them we shall have occasion to refer again when discussing the subject of Christian asceticism ; but here I am concerned with them only so far as a knowledge of them is necessary to the appreciation of the relation of Christianity, and especially of Christian ethics, to that purely secular and materialistic or irreligious outlook with which we are familiar to-day as prevalent, and to all appearance increasingly prevalent, among those who enjoy the vastly multiplied instru-

ments of convenience, pleasure and profit which a greatly increased knowledge of natural processes has placed at the disposal of our contemporaries.

This outlook, as a brilliant, though fanciful and untrustworthy writer, Oswald Spengler, has pointed out,\* is one which, is natural when a large proportion of the population lives in great cities ; for it is in great cities, such as those which the growth of industrialism has created during the last century in so many parts of the world, that men are cut off from their roots in the life of their countryside and from the worship of God which has ever been the most sacred of its traditions. Of Europe it is probably true to say that the spread of this outlook has been assisted by the disappearance, where what is called the Reformation was successful, of the monastic institutions which had provided for the cultivation by certain persons of a life devoted to the practice of contemplation and prayer, and separate from the ordinary life of citizens engaged in making money. The disappearance of these was connected, as we saw, with the desire to have but one moral standard, and that the highest ; to insist that God could be served by the religious performance of domestic and civil duties no less than by retirement and the observance of ascetic rules. But the weakness of human nature easily brings it about that where there is no general social recognition of a certain mode of life, no external provision for the living of it, that mode of life tends to slip out of men's thoughts ; and so it has certainly been in those Protestant countries which have been most conspicuous as the nurseries of the secular and industrial civilization which is dominant in the world to-day. At the same time it must be observed, as a set-off to this fact, that in Catholic countries, where such institutions for the cultivation of ascetic and contemplative religion have continued in being, there has been on the whole, chiefly in consequence of their intimate connexion with the international organization of which the Roman bishops or

\* In his *Untergang des Abendlandes* (*The Decline of the West*) Eng tr by C. F. Atkinson.

popes are the head, a greater hostility to religion among those who have thrown themselves into the work of promoting the material interests of their several nations than in countries where there does not exist this association of the tradition of Christian religion with an organization whose centre is external to the national life.

But, whatever its causes, we cannot but take account of the growth of a secular and materialistic spirit, increasing at a greater rate the more rapid the progress of inventions for the improvement of the means of communication among men and of the conveniences of human life on earth. There is a real danger that, with the spread of the culture which is based on the satisfaction of economic needs and inspired by physical science, civilization will lose its soul; for it is a people's religion that is the soul of its civilization, and this kind of culture may easily seem to leave no room for religion.

To the civilization of Europe it was, as we have seen, the Christian religion that for centuries afforded the spiritual sustenance which it is thus the business of religion to supply; and for a long while, even when it was already evident that the doctrines of Christianity had lost much of the hold which they formerly had, the ethical principles which had been based upon these doctrines retained their influence. In more recent times, however, it has become plain that they too are more and more slackening their grip, as it is realized that they are bound up with the fading belief in a God, our duty to whom is the presupposition and root of our duty to one another.

Now, as a Christian, I myself believe that Christianity has not lost its power to quicken again in modern civilization the soul which it quickened long ago in the Graeco-Roman civilization, which had also become to a great extent a civilization of great cities and of material efficiency. But, also as a Christian, I do not believe that Christianity is what it is meant to be or can do this work which we demand of it, if it is content to be a European religion only. That work will be done, if at all, by a religion which is able to draw upon



the treasures of religious passion and of religious experience which exist elsewhere than in Europe, and not least in India; which has learned the lesson of that age-long quest for a closer union with the Eternal Reality beyond the changes and chances of our earthly life, which has been abundantly illustrated by the sacred poets, the saints and the sages of this great country. If the growth of great cities which has been so marked a feature of the world's history in the last hundred years, has favoured a forgetfulness of God which means a starving of the soul, we can understand why it is, as I have been told, the village life of a land where the vast majority of the people still lives in villages that is the chief concern of so religious a leader of his countrymen as Mahatma Gandhi. But the problem which is set to all religious people now is, while cultivating whatever spiritual life there is throughout the world in villages and countrysides or elsewhere, to find the means of inspiring in that increasing number of our fellow creatures who must dwell in great cities the thought of God and the desire to know him and to be united to him; for we may be sure that it is possible, in the words of an English religious poet, for men to

"            carry music in their heart  
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,  
Plying their daily task with busier feet  
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat " \*

It has happened that those who have brought to India the civilization which has been so deeply infected by the secularism or materialism of which I have been speaking, with its threat to the soul of every people to which it comes, have belonged to a nation professing the Christian name; but there is nothing in the ethics of Christianity to sanction this corruption of what in itself is good. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." †  
"Be not anxious what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink or

\* Keble, *Christian Year* (S. Matthew).

† Luke XII, 15.

what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?"\* "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."† "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"‡ All these are words of Jesus himself; and there are many others in the same strain which are for Christians of divine authority. In resisting a tendency which is the enemy of all religion, and which only religion can overcome, those who oppose the inroads of materialism and secularism must have the sympathy of all real Christians. In my next Lecture, which will deal with the place of religion in the ethics of Christianity, I shall attempt to show how it has been that, in despite of this, Christianity has sometimes seemed to show less outward regard for the things of the spirit than have other faiths.

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\* Matt. VI. 25

† Matt. VI. 33

‡ Mark, VIII. 36

## V.

### RELIGION AND ETHICS IN CHRISTIANITY.

At the end of my last Lecture I said that I would go on to speak of the place of religion in the ethics of Christianity ; and that, in doing so, I would say something which might serve to explain why, although Christianity, as we saw, teaches that the worth of spiritual union with God incomparably excels that of all economic and material wellbeing, Christians often seem to non-Christians to set less store than others on the outward recognition, by the practice of religious devotion, whether ritual or contemplative, of a world higher and more abiding than that with which the ordinary business of our daily life is concerned. The explanation which I would suggest is two-fold. In the first place, I should admit that my own nation and others belonging to the northern parts of the world are, not because of their Christianity, but from their racial temperament, which owes much to the climate of the regions in which they live, and from their historical traditions, less disposed than those of more southern regions to those habits of meditation and asceticism which at once strike the observer as testifying to the interest taken by those that display them in a spiritual sphere beyond the pleasures and the struggles, the anxieties and achievements of our worldly existence. Meditation and asceticism are familiar features of Christianity as of other religions ; but they are temperamentally difficult to men of certain races, and are therefore less obvious and prominent in the lives of such men, even where, under the influence of their Christianity, they may practise them in secret. But it is also true that as this phrase " in secret " \* may remind us, there is in the tradi-

\* See Matt. VI 4, 6, 18

tions of Christianity itself something that encourages this secrecy ; it is connected with that emphasis on humility, that aversion from self-complacency, which I mentioned before as distinctive of Christian morality ; and it is able to allege in its favour express injunctions of Jesus, in which he bade his followers pray and fast and give alms indeed, but in secret, so that their left hand should not know what their right hand did \* It is easy for Christians who are tempted, like other men, to neglect religious duties, to excuse themselves by an appeal to this censure of external religion, while those who are truly religious and do not neglect them, put themselves to some pains not to seem outwardly better than their neighbours.

But this too is not all. It is true, as I shall try to shew later, and as, I think, is generally recognized, that the connexion between religion and morality in Christianity is especially close ; so close that people brought up as Christians are sometimes apt to think that, where there are kindly social activities, because they are morally admirable, religion, properly so called, a conscious quest of God and deliberate communion with him, is unnecessary, or that, at least, its claims are sufficiently met by attendance at a public religious ceremony on stated occasions. Men who have not only been brought up as Christians, but have really learned something of the Christian life, are not, of course, content with such a scant measure of religious practice as this ; but, on the other hand, here again, the stress laid by Christianity on morality as the *test*, because it is the *fruit*, of religion leads the most religious Christians to be willing charitably to suppose religion secretly to be present where any person's social activities are such as might be carried on by a religious Christian, although there be no other outward evidence on his part of concern with anything beyond the economic affairs and interests of ordinary life.

\* Matt. VI. 3.

Nevertheless, as we saw in my second Lecture, the fundamental formula of Christian ethics unquestionably recognizes that there are two distinct commandments · that of love to God and that of love to our neighbour, and it is the former of these, the commandment to love God, which is called by Jesus ' the first and great commandment ' In estimating the nature and value of the contribution made by Christianity to the moral tradition of mankind, there is perhaps nothing which calls for more careful consideration than the significance to be attached to this ' first and great commandment '

Among the people of my own country, at any rate—and you will let me speak of what I know at home, even though the conditions in this country may be in many respects different—among us in England there is at the present day a very general recognition of the obligation to cultivate a spirit of universal brotherhood, leading to the treatment of others as we would wish them to treat us But, along with it, we find a widespread reaction against the recognition of a divine Being, to whose legislative authority such an obligation can be referred ; a recognition which not so very long ago was generally regarded as a necessary pre-requisite of any acknowledgment of moral obligation at all

I will now attempt to point out where, as it appears to me, lies the *strength* of this interest in the commandment to love our neighbour in complete independence of love to God, for if we perceive this, we shall be in a better position to perceive also any *weakness* which there may be in a reduction of the *two* great commandments to *one*, and that the *second*, and so to understand more fully the true significance and scope of the *first*. And I shall find it the most convenient course to begin with a reference to a philosopher of whom I spoke in my first Lecture, to Kant For, as I intimated then, Kant appears to me, among all the philosophers, ancient or modern, with whom I am acquainted, to have most clearly and decisively called attention to that among the features of our moral experience which is, in my judgment, the most distinctive and essential.

Kant (as I reminded you before) taught that the moral consciousness is a consciousness of what he called a 'categorical imperative.' That is to say, it is the consciousness of an obligation to do or not to do something or other—or rather to *will* the doing or not doing of it, since it is, he held, morally indifferent whether in a particular case circumstances permit our will to be carried into effect—not because by doing or not doing it (as the case may be) we expect to win for ourselves any pleasure or satisfaction, or avoid any pain or discomfort—but purely because it is *right*, is our *duty*, to do or not to do this thing. He meant, as we saw, by 'categorical' in the phrase 'categorical imperative' the opposite of 'hypothetical.' 'If you would be rich or happy, you must do this or that.' That is a *hypothetical* imperative. If you reply 'But I don't wish to be rich,' all I can say is 'Very well then, you can leave this alone.' Perhaps no one could honestly say that he does not wish to be happy. But at least you may say, 'I would rather not be happy at that cost.' And again I can urge you no more. But if I say 'It is your *duty* to do this,' you can only dispute it *being* your duty. To say 'I don't want to do my duty' or 'I had rather not do my duty than do this' will in no way affect your obligation to do it. If it is your duty, it remains your duty none the less. No consideration of any mere *consequences*—of course we must be careful to distinguish 'mere consequences' from parts of the action willed which come later in time—can affect the obligation of a genuine duty. What I mean by 'parts of the action willed which come later in time' as distinguished from 'mere consequences' can be illustrated by an example. Suppose it to be my duty to fit myself for doing my proper work better by taking a holiday—or, again, to help a certain poor man to become independent of charitable relief. If I find that the holiday which I had at first designed to take would lead to my involving myself in anxieties which would unfit me for work, it will plainly not be my duty to take that holiday under such circumstances—for it would *not be* a holiday fitting me to take up my work with new zest. Or, in the other example, if I find that the money which I wish to send

to the poor man would be instantly squandered by him in drink or in assisting some spendthrift relation, I shall *not* be helping him to independence by sending it to him; and so what may be called the 'consequences' of what I meant at first to do (to travel to a certain place, or to send a certain amount of money to a certain address) will render it no longer my duty to do *that*. But this is because they are not really 'mere consequences' but alter or cancel part of the action which it was my duty to perform.

Now it was clearly impossible for Kant, holding such a view of the nature of morality as I have just outlined, to allow that the obligation to do right actions could be reduced to an obligation to do what God has commanded, in the sense that the *sanction* (as it is called by writers on moral philosophy) of all moral acts is to be sought in the rewards and penalties, here or in another life, which may have been instituted by God for obedience and disobedience to his commands respectively. That would be to convert the *categorical* imperative of morality into a *hypothetical*. He could only allow that a moral law could be represented as a divine command, if this were taken as a way of putting the matter which would suggest indeed the supreme importance of the law, but at the same time would allow us to regard any particular duty as a divine command because we know it to be our duty, not to regard it as our duty because it has been commanded by God.

Now, here I think that Kant was right as against certain views more prevalent in his day than at present; but if we are to do justice to his way of expressing himself, we must be clear what these views were. He was right, in my opinion, in refusing to regard moral laws as deriving their binding character from the fact that they are found laid down in Scripture or other collection of revealed precepts, rather than on account of their inherent fitness, a fitness directly perceived by what he called the 'practical reason,' to be 'laws for all rational beings.' He was right too, I think, in holding there were no 'court duties,' as he called them, owing to God, in which God is especially interested because they are owed to *him*, just as a father might be especially inter-

ested in a son's performance of his filial duties or a sovereign in his subject's performance of his political duties. If we suppose such a special interest on God's part in duties owed to *him* and to no other person, we are, I think,—and Kant, I believe, thought so too—in serious danger of coming to suppose that we may somehow compensate for defects in our conduct to other people by our devotion to God, who, we may imagine, will be likely to regard with peculiar favour one who has at any rate discharged his duty to *him*, even if he have neglected that to his neighbour. Such conceptions as these, of *arbitrary* enactment by God of laws which might just as well have been otherwise but that he has chosen to order them thus ; or of duties in which God is particularly concerned, because they relate especially to him ; are rejected by Kant as separating religion from morality in a way in which he regarded it as the especial merit of Christianity that it did *not* separate it. These conceptions were sufficiently often met with in the current ethical teaching of his day for him to be anxious to put his readers on their guard against them. But his own feeling toward the moral law was one of profound and, in the strictest sense, *religious* reverence. He did regard it as divinely given ; but he did not think that its divinity needed to be accredited by any other evidence than the manifest authority with which it spoke to the heart and conscience of man. If one was honest with oneself, he thought, one could not mistake it for other than the voice of God. Holding therefore, as he did, that there were no special duties to God over and above those to our neighbour, he certainly might seem to leave no room for the *two* commandments of the Christian law. If the love commanded therein is, as he said, a *practical* love ; if there is nothing we can *do* to God ; then our duty to love God is in fact our duty to our neighbour. There are not two commandments, but only one.

Nevertheless, I think that Kant would not have regarded the first commandment, the commandment to love God, as a mere needless adjunct to the second. For all his objections to thinking of the moral law as possessing, so to say, a merely statutory authority, as being what God, if we may so express



it, has happened to lay down, he was profoundly in earnest with his belief in its intrinsic authority. With him, as with the English philosopher Butler, *authority* was indeed the chief note of the law which the conscience apprehends, and this authority was not for him the less truly *divine* authority that it did not rest upon external sanctions in the form of rewards for obedience and penalties for disobedience appended to it by the will of the divine law-giver. In the fragmentary notes left by him in his desk at his death and recently published under the title of *Opus postumum* we find a more explicit recognition than in his earlier writings of God's *immanence* in the moral law\*; but this immanence is none the less that of a constraining *authority*. This being so, he could and probably did regard what we are here calling the first commandment—the commandment to love God—as enjoining the general surrender of our wills to the moral law, whatever that law may command; which law will then be found to reveal itself as consisting in obedience to each duty towards our neighbour which may result from the principle of treating humanity in our person or in that of any other person always as an end, and never only as a means; a principle which, in Kant's peculiar phraseology, corresponds to the commandment which we are here calling the second commandment, the commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Now, I think that in my own country, forty-five years ago, when I was myself an undergraduate student at Oxford, such an interpretation of the commandment to love God as I have just suggested would have met with more general acceptance than at the present day. Many then would with Kant, have denied that God required of men what Kant calls 'court duties' towards himself, duties of external reverence and worship, over and above a life of duty to their neighbours performed in a just and loving spirit. Many would have gone further, and doubted the existence of a personal, or even of a transcendent God at all. But, like Kant, they would have invested the Moral Law or Duty with all the "solemn

\* See the present writer's *Kant's Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 178 ff.

majesty " that had always belonged to the idea of God ; and they would have thought an ethical system inadequate which did not in this duty to their neighbours, this social service, see not merely an obligation toward the particular individuals who were its immediate objects, but also the acknowledgment of a Principle of Goodness, conformity to which was the common interest of all those who were bound to one another by the bonds of mutual duty and obligation

I do not think that it can be denied that among the younger generation (I am speaking still of my own country) there is another view in vogue to-day. There is a wide-spread recognition that there are duties owed by one individual to another who is his or her comrade, whom he or she cannot ' let down,' as the phrase is, without incurring self-reproach for doing so. But this duty is not envisaged as a law imposed by an authority superior to ourselves, or even, in the manner of Kant, as the utterance of an autonomous reason enthroned as sovereign within our souls. It is supposed rather to derive its power over each individual from the appeal of the other's trust in him, a trust based on the consciousness that both alike are seeking, each for himself, the opportunity of the fullest possible satisfaction of his innate desire of self-expression. Now, in my own opinion, the attitude which I have just described, although those who adopt it often repudiate many traditional obligations, yet in emphasizing, as we see that it does, the *obligation* of mutual comradeship, really implies after all the recognition of what Kant called a ' categorical imperative.' But to those who take up this position it may very well seem that there is nothing for the first commandment to add to the second ; no love to God which can be distinguished from love to our neighbour ; since there is not only no personal God who imposes the law, but no such abstract substitute for God as a Categorical Imperative, a Principle of Goodness, or a Universal Good, as a generation ago seemed to give an intelligible reference to the requirement expressed in the first commandment or love to God ; a requirement which transcends the tie of mutual helpfulness between individuals and serves as the background, if not as

the foundation, of our behaviour toward our individual neighbours.

I will attempt very briefly to trace the history of the view which I have just described. Early Christianity undoubtedly commended its moral teaching to its adherents by an appeal to *authority*. Amid a welter of discussion in the philosophical schools of the day as to the chief end of human life and the best means of securing that end, whatever it might be, the new religion propounded a code, which purported to be revealed by a God who, in creating man, had set before him a certain goal; and, when he had failed to take the appointed means to secure it, had supplied him with the assistance necessary to repair this failure and to become at last what it was originally designed that he should eventually be.

How could this claim, we may reasonably ask, be made for Christianity consistently with the other claim which I have previously in these Lectures made for it, that it is opposed to any system of mere commands, and that, according to its teaching, all rules of conduct must derive their sanction and justification from their tendency to aid in the carrying out of the only ultimate requirement, that of love to God and man? To this question I would give the following answer.

Morality wears two aspects—the aspect of duty, and the aspect of the attainment of the ultimate satisfaction of desires—or, to put it another way, of the full realization of capacities. The word ‘right’ suggests the former aspect, the word ‘good’ the latter. No presentation of morality which ignored either aspect altogether would be true to the whole of our moral experience. On the one hand, no satisfaction of desires which did not include the satisfaction of doing one’s duty could be an adequate satisfaction for a being conscious of the claim of duty. On the other hand, just because this is so, in proportion as the human spirit is sensitive to the claim of duty upon it, it will find in the response to that claim the one indispensable means to its ultimate satisfaction; and so, though it be essential that an action, to be truly moral, should not be performed for the sake of its consequences, so that one

might decline the obligation to perform it by refusing to aim at its consequences, yet to deny that in the discharge of duty ultimate satisfaction can be found and the best capacities of the self realised, is to leave the mind which acquiesces in such a denial a bewildered waif in an incoherent and irrational world

In the history of European thought, the doctrine of Aristotle emphasizes the second of the two aspects of morality of which I have spoken (self-realization), and that of Kant the first (unconditional obligation or duty); while Aristotle's doctrine that the virtuous action must be chosen for its own sake, and Kant's doctrine of the *summum bonum* or Supreme Good, stand respectively in each philosopher's system for the recognition in that system of the aspect on which the other has laid the greater stress

At the time of the first preaching of Christianity Aristotle and the other Greek philosophers who were in general agreement with him in considering morality primarily as conduct conducive to the true good of mankind, whatever that might be, were already in the field ; but the Kantian philosophy was still in the womb of the future. The ethical teaching introduced by Christianity, deeply coloured as it was by the Jewish conception of legislation by the one only true God, with sanctions in the way of rewards for obedience and penalties for disobedience, stood over against current philosophical theories as better able than they to satisfy that inexpugnable sense of an absolute obligation which, if Kant be right (as I think he is), is involved in the moral consciousness of all men. For it introduced the conception of the *authority* of the moral law, pictured as a divine command, and along with it the corresponding sense of personal sinfulness in those who have discarded this authority, and of their need to rely on a Higher than themselves for forgiveness of their fault and for the power to obey the law hereafter. At the same time, whereas the current theories had for the most part no outlook beyond the present life, the Christian doctrine of rewards and punishments introduced the element of *faith* in the ultimate

supremacy over the whole universe of the authority revealed in the moral law ; and thus met the doubts of any who should be tempted to calculate the small chance there might be in a particular case, were this life all to which he had to look forward, whether loyalty to a moral principle usually acknowledged would after all conduce in the long run to the welfare of him who should adhere to it. Christianity thus contributed to the ethics of the world of Graeco-Roman civilization a sense of *authority* in the moral law and a *faith* in the divine sovereignty over the universe which were of immense value,—even though there may have been, nay certainly was, a tendency among Christians on the one hand to fall back into a presentation of morality as a positive code of rules such as the saying of Christ about the two great commandments of love to God and our neighbour had promised to set aside for ever ; and on the other to relapse into loveless calculations of ultimate expediency no less inconsistent with the Gospel ideal of disinterested love.

During the Middle Ages the nations of Modern Europe were growing up under the shadow of the Christian church from barbarism into civilization, and the thought sank deep into men's minds of an authoritative moral code resting upon the declared will of One able to reward obedience to his commands with everlasting happiness and disobedience with everlasting punishment, often pictured in very crude forms, some of them borrowed from old mythologies. When these nations arrived at national maturity there awoke among them a desire for free self-expression which brought about a tendency to revert to views emphasizing the goodness of self-realization rather than the strict obligation of duty—to such views, in fact, as had been current in classical antiquity ; and it is this tendency of which we see the outcome in the modern revolt against the whole conception of authority in ethics.

This desire of free self-expression inspired what is called the Renaissance or new birth of learning and letters in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of the Christian era. It is perhaps more justly regarded as the return to life of the old Greek estimate of civilization as good in itself after a period in

which it had been disparaged in comparison with the preparation for another life, which might break in upon the whole world at any moment, and must for every individual bring to an end at death any worldly activities which might occupy his earthly days. The immediate effect of the Renaissance upon the life of educated Europeans was to induce a certain *double-mindedness*. Retaining then belief in the Christian religion, but holding along with it the new estimate of civilization as in itself good, they pursued art and science and the other gifts of that civilization with ardour, while still looking upon religion as something supernatural, belonging to another world than this. This "double-mindedness" the poets and thinkers of what is often called the Romantic movement, which began towards the end of the eighteenth century, proposed to remove by seeking what I may call the religious values *within* instead of *without* the world and its civilization.

The whole history of European religion during the nineteenth century, especially in the Protestant churches, illustrates the steady growth of what may be described as *immanentism*, of this endeavour to find religious values not *without* but *within* secular civilization, and to see in Religion (which meant, for the great majority of Europeans, in the Christian religion) rather the soul of the secular civilization which had arisen among the nations professing Christianity than, as heretofore, something which transported the religious man outside of it altogether. No longer did it seem clear that our serious interests should lie elsewhere, in another world, and that we should care for the comfort and convenience, the taste and the knowledge, which secular civilisation has to bestow, only so far as it might be instrumental in preparing for life in that other world. Rather we were to look to civilization to lift us here and now, through the free exercise of our noblest faculties in social service and in the contemplation of beauty and of truth, into the highest life of which human nature is capable. Political creeds based on the belief in progress as the law of human history,—a belief which is not inculcated by any of the great religions of the world—were natural accompaniments of this outlook; an outlook

which found utterance in the saying of a famous Russian writer: "I believe in civilization and I require no further creed."\*

This faith in civilization was rudely shaken by the catastrophe of the Great War, and the view which I described above as common to-day among the younger generation in my country results from the combination of what I have called the *immanentism* of the nineteenth century—the tendency to look for the religious values of life within rather than without secular civilization—with the destruction, largely due to the War, of that faith in secular civilization which had characterized European thought in the nineteenth century and had seemed to many capable of replacing the old belief in God. If God is to be found neither without nor within the life of this world, we are left, in the phrase of the Christian apostle Paul, "without God in the world"†; and consequently the commandment to love God with all our heart and mind and strength has no longer any significance for us. Our human comrades are left to us; the commandment to love them as ourselves still sounds in our ears, and thus the ethical teaching of Christianity is not wholly abandoned; and moreover there are two respects in which we may recognize that the very revolt against the tradition of Christian morality which we are witnessing betrays its own indebtedness to the doctrines of Christianity.

In the first place, although the demand for free self-expression seems to revert from the Christian emphasis on self-surrender and the service of God to the old Greek thought of man's highest good as consisting in the fullest possible exercise of all the noble capacities that are to be found in his nature, it was not so much the individuality of each human being that the Greek philosophers had in view as the nature common to all men; but the translation of the doctrine of self-realization into individual terms echoes the peculiarly Christian conviction of the infinite value of every personality

\* Turgeneff, quoted by Bosanquet, *The Civilisation of Christendom*, p. 68.

† Eph. II. 12.

in the sight of God. In the second place, consciously or not,—or rather, sometimes consciously and sometimes not,—what I may call the atheistic ethics of comradeship are at bottom a development of the central Christian doctrine that he who hath seen Christ hath seen God, and that whatever is done to the human brethren of Christ is done to him in them. Thus, even to the modern European morality which counts itself non-Christian, the contribution made by Christianity is of great importance. Yet in its elimination of authority, which goes along with its elimination of God, it must, I think, be allowed that, notwithstanding that it preserves and even exaggerates some features of Christian ethics more specifically Christian than this (for emphasis on divine authority is quite as characteristic of some other religions, especially of Judaism and of Islam, as it is of Christianity), it parts company with a feature of Christianity without which it would be impossible to recognize any religion as being entitled to bear that name.

Christianity has always inculcated upon its followers the worship of God, both in private and in unison with their fellow believers, not however as a prescribed ritual which must be performed whether understood or not, and in the performance of which God takes as it were a special interest, as a duty owed not to another than he but to himself—not, that is, as, in Kant's phrase, a "court duty"—but rather as the natural expression of our consciousness of being God's children, dependent upon him and looking to him with grateful affection for the satisfaction of all our needs; and as the inevitable result of the sense of being joined together in fellowship with those who share the same filial relation towards the same heavenly Father. While, however, I do not think that the Christian life can be lived without prayer and divine worship, I think that the intimate association in the Christian summary of duties of love to God, which must issue in prayer and worship, with love to our neighbour is a contribution of the highest importance made by Christianity to ethics. It is, however, an intimate association of two principles, not the idle repetition of the same principle twice over. For without



the first commandment, that of love to God, the position of the second, that of love to man, is, I am convinced, precarious ; because the obligation to obey the second is made to rest in the last resort on *feeling* and not on *principle*. Where affection or even sympathy is present, these no doubt seem so to quicken and deepen the consciousness of obligation that the performance of the same duty on the grounds of principle alone seems in comparison worthless and insignificant. Yet feelings of affection and sympathy are necessarily variable and uncertain, while principle is independent of the lapses and variations of feeling. On the other hand, benevolence on principle tends to arouse the appropriate emotions without which it would be imperfect and defective. The first commandment expresses the principle of moral obligation in the form of a "law universal" (to use Kant's phrase), whose "manifest authority" (to use an expression of Butler's)\* is the common or unifying feature in all the several obligations towards our neighbours by which we are on different occasions conscious of being bound. It expresses the principle moreover in form not of an abstract law, but of a personal Being demanding from us—not indeed what Kant called "court duties" in which he is interested as he is not interested in the duties owed to our neighbours,—but just those very duties themselves, unified by their reference to him as the imponent and common object of all duties, to whomsoever they may be owed.

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## VI.

### ASCETICISM IN CHRISTIANITY.

In my last lecture I was concerned with the place of Religion in the Ethics of Christianity. I pointed out that there was unquestionably among some Christians a tendency to treat morality as if it were the only really important part of religion, and to neglect the external worship, the practice of ascetic self-denial, and the meditation on spiritual things which in most lands count for so much in it. I have spoken of this tendency as a tendency existing among Christians rather than as a tendency of Christianity; for it is much more evident, to say the least, among Christians from the north of Europe than among those from the shores of the Mediterranean, and also among those (mostly of North European origin), who follow the Protestant form of Christianity than among those who follow the Catholic form of it, or who belong to the Churches which are commonly called Eastern, those, I mean, of what Europeans describe as the Near East. This tendency among certain Christians, we saw, could find encouragement in the great stress which in the New Testament is laid upon social morality as the chief fruit of religion and the grand test of its morality, and also upon the duty of avoiding anything like an ostentation of religious observance. For it is remarkable that, though it is in our conduct towards other men that the service asked of men by God is in the teaching of Jesus made chiefly if not altogether to consist,—so that, in this sense, Christianity is pre-eminently a social religion,—yet the same teaching is notably individualistic in the slight importance attached by it to social ceremonies compared with the conformity of each man's will to God and his personal relation to God as his own Father in heaven. But I also called attention to the fact that in the summary of God's law which forms the basis of Christian moral teaching there

are after all two commandments and not one ; and that the first of these is the commandment of love to God, which is thus distinguished from the love of our neighbour and given precedence over it. I said that I was prepared to agree with Kant, who seemed to me to be in this point interpreting aright the teaching of the Gospel, that according to that teaching God does not require of us 'count duties' in which he is especially interested, as he is not in those duties which we owe to other men rather than to him. On the other hand I suggested that this does not imply that we can, as some people have come to think, dispense with any thought of God, and content ourselves with behaving in a comrade-like way to the individuals with whom we come in contact. At any rate, that is not Christian morality. Christianity requires its followers in the first place to love God with all their heart and mind and strength ; and in the second to love their neighbours as themselves, because that is required of us by the God who is the object of this unqualified love. The love of our neighbour,—a *practical* love, that is a conduct such as love would suggest (for feelings cannot be commanded, though they tend naturally to follow on the conduct which they would prompt if they were present)—will not be limited by any of those circumstances of nationality or class or kinship or congeniality or affection which inevitably help to determine our emotional reactions in intercourse with other people ; but will be regulated by the principle of the equality of all men as alike objects of God's fatherly care and providence.

Now, although no rules of external worship are prescribed in the New Testament, the love of God, which is thus the object of the first commandment in Christ's law, cannot but bring along with it, to express and foster it, the use of prayer and thanksgiving ; and from the very first Christians have as a matter of fact met together to offer prayer and thanksgiving to God. But, though there is thus a place for religious worship in Christian ethics, the inculcation of this as a duty, while it no doubt distinguishes Christianity from mere secularism, which recognizes no Being, within or without us, to

whom worship can or ought to be offered, it certainly does not distinguish it from other religions of the world, and cannot be reckoned as a distinctive contribution made by Christianity to ethics. Neither again, although asceticism is a feature of Christianity as of nearly all religions, can the recognition of it, whether as a duty or as a means towards the full realization of our capacities, be considered as such a contribution. On the contrary, in a comparison of Christianity with the other great religions of the world, it would undoubtedly be found that other faiths have far surpassed it in the number of their adherents engaged in ascetic practices, and in the rigour and severity of the practices in which they have engaged. Nevertheless Christianity has always, as I said, like other religions, recognized asceticism as possessing a religious value, and I propose in the present lecture to describe the particular religious value attributed to it by Christianity—a value we shall find to be in some respects different from that attributed to it in other religions. This is not the place for controversy and I shall not enter upon any discussion as to the relative merits of the view of asceticism which is characteristic of Christianity and that which has obtained elsewhere. I shall only try to describe the former view as well as I can, and to illustrate from the history of the Christian Church the attitude taken up by Christians at different times and under different circumstances toward a kind of life which has in most religions been cultivated and honoured as a way to the achievement of spiritual perfection.

If we look at the account given in the Gospels of the teaching of Jesus himself to see what is contained in it about asceticism and its place in the religious life, we shall, I think, be struck by two things. (1) by the emphasis laid by Jesus on the surrender of family and other social ties required of those who would be his followers; and (2) by the absence of any emphasis upon the deliberate cultivation of ascetic practices as a means to the attainment of a higher life, nearer to the divine because farther from that of the senses, such as has been recommended in other religions and has often been associated

with the monastic institutions of later Christendom. We must however not fail to note, as regards the former of these two characteristics of the teaching of Jesus, that the call to set oneself free from the obligations of domestic life is directly associated with actual participation in the homeless life of 'preaching the kingdom of God' which Jesus himself had adopted.\* It is put forward not as the duty of all men, but rather as the special sacrifice required of those who would enrol themselves in the company of his immediate disciples. Again, as regards the latter of the two characteristics of Jesus' teaching to which I have called attention, we must be careful not to overlook the fact that, while he lays no stress upon the deliberate adoption of ascetic practices and even contrasts his own habit of taking part in ordinary social life, 'eating and drinking' in the company of other men, with that of his forerunner John the Baptist, who had lived an ascetic life of solitude and fasting in the desert,† nevertheless he is said to have inaugurated his ministry by a fast of forty days,‡ and in his teaching takes fasting for granted as being, along with prayer and almsgiving, one of the recognized exercises of religion.§

When we turn from the Gospels to the later history of Christendom, we feel at once a difference between the ideas there current and those at first sight suggested by the aspects of Christ's own teaching to which I have referred in the preceding paragraph. On the one hand we find not only a general acquiescence in the undertaking by professed Christians of the ordinary duties of spouse and parent, of householder and citizen, but a widespread belief that in Christianity is to be found the chief support and sanction of these duties. On the other hand, throughout the centuries of the Christian era a very large proportion of Christians have regarded celibacy, withdrawal from the ordinary economic pursuits of men

\* See Luke, IX. 57 ff.

† Matt. XI. 16 ff.

‡ Mark I. 12 ff.

§ Matt. VI. 16 ff.

and from the service of the State, together with the systematic practice of austerities, as characteristic of a life specially devoted to Christ and as affording peculiarly favourable opportunities for attaining to Christian perfection. The ideas expressed in these contrasted views alike differ from those at first sight suggested by the teaching ascribed to Christ in the Gospels, as appealing to attach a higher value, in the one case, to domestic and civic life, in the other, to deliberate asceticism than Christ's own words seem to attribute to either.

Now, in studying the teaching of Jesus, we ought never to forget that in the background of it there always lie the Old Testament and the ethical tradition of Israel, accepted by teacher and taught alike as of divine origin. None of the teaching of Jesus, we must bear in mind, was directly addressed to 'Gentiles,' that is, to non-Jews. He 'was not sent,' he is recorded to have said, 'but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,'\* that is, to Jews who had sinned against the law of their God. We must also, in studying later Christian teaching, never forget that, when the Christian Church emerged from its Jewish cradle and entered on its mission to the Graeco-Roman world, it brought with it, as part of its gift to that world, the Old Testament and the ethical tradition of Israel. These could not, in addressing the Greeks and Romans and the other peoples of the Mediterranean area other than the Jews, be assumed and presupposed, as they had been by Jesus, who addressed none but Jews. On the contrary, the Jewish Scriptures and the Jewish morality had to be themselves inculcated and enforced, as themselves coming from God, before the teaching of Jesus, which had them as its background and its context, could be understood.

There have been, almost from the first, some few Christian teachers who have regarded as mistaken this inclusion in the message of the Christian Church of the Old Testament along with the New, of the tradition of Israel along with the words of Christ—words which so often corrected or qualified it. No doubt it is true that this inclusion has sometimes

\* Matt. XV. 24.

tended to obscure certain characteristic features of Christ's teaching. It has often aided in transforming a Gospel or 'good news' of freedom and love into a code of positive laws commanded under terrible penalties for disobedience: and has been responsible for replacing ceremonial observances, such as that of a weekly sabbath, in the very position for placing them in which the strict Jews of his day had incurred the constant censure of Jesus himself. Nevertheless it is of first rate importance to the theory and even to the practice of Christian ethics that they should not be altogether detached from the Jewish background, apart from the consideration of which the presentation of them in the New Testament and in Christian tradition is really unintelligible.

The saying of Jesus, for example, about "hating father and mother—" "If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his own father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"\*—can only be understool, as in fact it has almost always been understood, if we think of it as addressed to Jews, who regarded filial piety as a primary duty, enjoined by God in the commandment "Honour thy father and thy mother," by a Jew, who himself, so far from repudiating the divine authority of that commandment, denounced with unsparring severity the dishonest casuistry of certain Jewish teachers, which, by means of the device of allowing the resources which might have supported a parent to be devoted to God's service, had, as he said, "made the word of " that very "God to be of none effect through their tradition."† In this particular instance there has been no general misunderstanding of Jesus chargeable against Christians; for very few of them have supposed him to be speaking against the duty of reverencing and loving one's parents. The great majority have rightly taken him to be concerned only with the exceptional case wherein a higher

\* Luke XIV. 26.

† See Mark VII. 9 ff

duty may involve our doing something which one's parents themselves, or others for them, regard as inconsistent with such love and reverence. In that exceptional case indeed it is precisely because a man recognizes as sacred the claim of his parents upon him that his action in obeying the higher call has the heroic quality which belongs to the service of which Jesus is speaking.

But in other cases there has been a misunderstanding similar to that of someone who, forgetting the Jewish background of the New Testament, should take this saying of Jesus to sanction indifference to that claim. Words of his have been taken at their face value as forbidding military service or public worship or economic prudence, where we must not less remember that the Old Testament, which teacher and taught alike regarded as divine, is full of histories of God-blessed warfare, of rules for the ritual service of God, and of stories of economic prosperity bestowed as a God-given reward for righteous dealing. It is one thing to forbid such things as I have mentioned, military service or public worship or economic prudence, as in every case irreligious or sinful; this Christ could not have done without repudiating the Old Testament. It is quite another thing to enjoin a love of our fellow men which could never be content with treating any man as one to whom we do not wish well, a love of God as our heavenly Father which, if perfect, would stand in no need of outward ceremonies to provoke our feelings of devotion; a quest of righteousness which would make even the bodily necessities of life a subject not of anxiety but of thankfulness to God when they are supplied, and of resignation to his will when they are withheld. Such a love of God and man, such a quest of righteousness will, in proportion as they are realised, transform human society; but Christianity has not been unfaithful to the teaching of Christ in holding that it is not by forbidding certain kinds of behaviour, some of which will be necessary so long as the principle of love to God and to man is not universally acknowledged and acted upon, and others as long as we live upon this earth, but rather by encouraging the love



of God and man and the quest of righteousness which such love inspires, that the transformation is to be brought about.

But, as I have already hinted, although the retention of the Old Testament and of the tradition of Jewish morality by the Christian Church as part of what it had to offer to the Gentile or non-Jewish world was justified by the fact that familiarity with this background and context of the Gospel teaching was necessary to the proper understanding of that teaching, there was a real danger involved, which is abundantly illustrated by the history of Christendom. This danger was that a society receiving the Jewish Law along with the Christian Gospel as part of the same religious teaching should settle down into a nominal Christianity which should, like the kind of religion of which Christ himself had proclaimed the insufficiency, merely invest national loyalties and traditional customs and earthly ambitions with a divine sanction; and, while using and venerating the Cross on which Christ suffered death at the hands of the civil and religious authorities of his day, should miss the significance of that aspect of the Christian religion of which the Cross is a symbol. This aspect is the continual realization that not amid national loyalties, however sacred, or traditional customs, however venerable, or aspirations after earthly happiness and prosperity, however natural and legitimate in their place, can the human spirit find its abiding home, but only in the freedom which is won through dying to them all and claiming a share in that eternal sonship to God which was manifested to men in the person and life of Jesus Christ. The life of the Christian Church in the world has been throughout its whole course marked by the tension between its acceptance of the gifts of what we call civilization, which it must recognize to have like every good and perfect gift, according to the saying of the apostle James, "come down from the Father of lights,"\* and the perpetual urgency of the call to surrender any and all of ~~them~~ for the sake of that which civilization cannot give.

\* James I. 17.

The office assigned to asceticism in Christianity has been that of keeping men from settling down to acquiescence in the self-indulgent enjoyment of these gifts of civilization by voluntary self-denial, inspired by the remembrance of the sufferings which, as Christians have believed, Christ himself had undergone out of love to men. Asceticism was not regarded in Christianity as a method of acquiring supernatural or supernormal powers, as a means of emancipating the spirit from any connection with the body and the material world, or as a way of escape from the illusion of separate individual personality. Owing to contact with other religious systems, such ideas of the power and purpose of ascetic practices may have exercised at times a certain influence upon Christian ascetics, but they are not really compatible with the teaching of Christianity. According to that teaching miraculous power is never supposed to be acquired by human exertion, but, wherever it appears, is looked upon as a gift from God in answer to prayer. Again, according to Christianity, matter is not evil, but good, and the immortality promised to men is therefore described not as a bodiless, but as an embodied immortality; and genuine reality is attributed to individual personality, which is regarded as of supreme value in God's sight, and the absorption of which into the unity of the divine nature Christians are not encouraged to expect. It is clear that these doctrines of Christianity, whatever estimate be formed of their value, while they allow of a real importance being ascribed to asceticism as *discipline*, place it in a less prominent position than it occupies in some religious systems, and discourage the carrying of it to such lengths as have elsewhere been thought desirable.

We have already noted that Jesus himself takes the practice of fasting for granted, as a religious observance in common use, and that he is even said to have inaugurated his ministry by fasting for forty days as the two greatest of the prophets of Israel, Moses and Elijah, were related to have done before him \*. But he did not encourage his disciples to

\* See Exod. XXIV. 18, 1 Kings XIX. 8.

fast “ while the Bridegroom ”—that is himself—“ was with them ”\* and he instructed them when they did fast, not to shew to men openly that they were doing so ;† and, though he is described as spending a whole night in prayer,‡ this vigil is not represented as undertaken by way of self-denial, but as the outcome of his need for communion with God. He was not himself married . and he is recorded to have said§ that in the resurrection there would be no marrying or giving in marriage, but that they who should attain to it would be as angels in heaven . But there is in his reported teaching no suggestion that virginity or celibacy under the conditions of the present life is, as it has often been considered by Christians, a perfection to be aimed at, as in itself lifting men to a higher than a human level , and while he recognized that his disciples may be called upon to forgo marriage (as they may be called to leave home and family and all that they have in order to follow him) yet this is spoken of by him as a *mutilation*,|| voluntarily undergone for the sake of the kingdom, like the plucking out of the right eye and the cutting off of the right hand, which he elsewhere says¶ may be demanded of us, should these be the only ways of avoiding some temptation to sin . And here again, as always, we must bear in mind that he was speaking as a Jew to Jews, to whom their scriptures and their tradition represented marriage as normally a sacred duty . Nowhere does he gainsay this view of it . Even marriage may have to be foregone for the Gospel’s sake ; yet there is in this no hint of a disparagement of it in itself but rather the contrary ; for it is ranked with other things whose goodness in themselves is just what gives its special value to the sacrifice of them for the sake of what is still better than they . It is to be noted, however, that it is only of marriage and never of any sexual union outside of marriage that Jesus

\* Matt IX 15

† Matt VI 16 ff

‡ Luke VI 12

§ Mark XII. 25

|| Matt XIX 12

¶ Matt V. 29 f.

speaks with approval; indeed he emphatically pronounces in favour of marriage, monogamous and indissoluble, as the only form of such union to be recognized as valid by his followers.\* In this he went beyond the customs of his own people, for, although by this time polygamy had died out among them, it was theoretically recognized as legitimate, since it had been practised by the saints and heroes of the Old Testament; and divorce was both allowed and frequently practised. Jesus on the other hand regarded polygamy and divorce as alike inconsistent with the ideal of marriage as he would have it practised by his own followers. In the Gospel of Matthew,† indeed, he is represented as admitting a single permissible ground for divorce; but even this is absent in the oldest version of his saying. Thus, so far as regards the teaching of Christ concerning that most important sphere of human conduct which includes the relations of the sexes, we find it to be an exaltation of marriage, monogamous and indissoluble, to the exclusion of all other forms of such relation; together with the recognition that men, and no doubt women too, may be called, as was he himself, to a celibate life, in order to devote themselves more completely to the work of winning men to submit their wills and lives to the righteousness and love of God.

But although the Founder of Christianity does not appear from the Gospels to have sanctioned a glorification of celibacy and the mortification of the flesh as the grand means of attaining to spiritual perfection, yet an asceticism based on such an estimate of these forms of self-denial found its way into the Christian Church, and a certain dualism resulting therefrom struck its roots deep into the moral life of Christendom. It was remembered that Jesus had on one occasion when asked by a rich young man, what he should do to inherit eternal life, spoken first of keeping the commandments—honouring his parents, abstaining from murder, adultery, theft and so on—but, when further pressed had added: “If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that thou hast, and give

\* Mark X 2 ff.

† XIX 9; cp V 32.

to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come, follow me."\* On this story was based the belief that the ascetic life of one without earthly property or ties was not indeed required of every Christian, but was a condition of being a *perfect* Christian. A man could, it was thought, be *saved*, as the phrase went, while discharging the duties of a married householder ; but yet this kind of life fell short, it was felt, of the Christian ideal, and of the pattern set by Christ himself, who had never married and settled down as a householder but had lived a life of celibacy and poverty, not having, as he once said, " where to lay his head."† Thus, as I mentioned in an earlier lecture, the notion arose of a narrower body of men, a church within the church, as it were, living what came to be called, in a peculiar and technical sense the " religious life," keeping not only the *precepts* of the Gospel, that is to say, the rules which all were required to observe, but the *counsels of perfection* which Jesus had given to those who sought perfection, by voluntarily abstaining from marriage and from the possession of private property. Especially was the tendency to this kind of moral dualism promoted by the great ascetic movement connected with the reaction in the fourth century of the Christian era from the growing worldliness of those Christians who did not separate themselves from the ordinary life of their neighbours. This worldliness was no longer, after the conversion of the Emperor Constantine and the recognition of Christianity as the established religion of the Roman State, held in check, as in earlier times it had been, by the risk of persecution for the Gospel's sake ; a fiery trial to which, while the State had continued to acknowledge the old Greek and Roman religions, the loyalty of Christians to their faith had been frequently exposed. But even before this period there had been creeping into Christian asceticism much that was not characteristically Christian. As has been said, the asceticism suggested or counselled in the Gospels, is always a sacrifice of what is

\* Matt. XIX. 16 ff.

† Matt. VIII. 20.

confessedly good, like the right eye and the right hand, for the sake of a higher good, not the ill-treatment of the body as a thing essentially ignoble or detestable, or the outraging of ordinary human affections as feelings unworthy of one devoted to the service of God. But language justifying an asceticism of this latter type, language contemptuous of the body and of ordinary human affections, inconsistent as this was with the Christian doctrine of a real and permanent incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, and with that other doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which Christianity, despite the great and obvious difficulties of accepting it in a literal sense, has always associated with its hope of immortality, yet found its way from the writings of the Stoics and Cynics, philosophers whose influence was very strong on serious men in the early Christian centuries, into the literature of Christian asceticism, and affected it down to quite modern times.

Now it is obvious that there was a danger for the ordinary Christian involved in the exaltation, as the truly Christian ideal, of a kind of life which he did not attempt to live; the danger of acquiescing in a standard lower than that which his conscience approved as the highest. On the other hand there was a danger for the man who embraced the so-called "religious life" of setting his heart on the exact performance of a strict rule rather than upon that whole-hearted love of God and love of one's neighbour as oneself which,—not the observance of a number of minute restrictions and ordinances,—is, according to the New Testament, all that God requires of man. Moreover it was by no means clear, despite the passages alleged in support of that view, that the New Testament really countenanced the belief in a double standard. It was possible to explain the so-called counsels of perfection as only meant for particular individuals, whose special call might be to work requiring celibacy and poverty as its conditions, without implying that this work must be higher than such as might be performed under other conditions. No doubt there was hardship involved in abandoning the hope of marriage or of wealth for the sake of one's duty; but so there

might be for others, whose duty pointed elsewhere, in bearing the heavy responsibilities which marriage or wealth entailed

Thus the movement in the Christian Church which goes by the name of the Reformation aimed, as I pointed out in a previous lecture, at establishing a single standard of Christian morals without any recognition of a technically "religious" life, such as that of a monk or nun, friar or hermit, transcending in merit the life of a "secular" Christian who discharges his duties as a householder and citizen in the world. Accordingly the orders of monks and nuns were in Protestant countries abolished, and the clergy, who, in the part of Christendom which recognized the authority of the Roman popes, had not for some centuries been allowed to marry, were permitted to do so. There was much loss as well as some gain in the disappearance of institutions which, although they no doubt led to abuses, by withdrawing from the economic life of the nation and from the function of parentage a great many men and women who had no special call to a religious life and would have been better employed in the ordinary duties of society, yet afforded opportunities for the development of certain fine types of character which could scarcely otherwise have been cultivated, and for the performance of certain services which are best discharged by persons free from family ties and economic responsibilities. The revival in recent times of such institutions in at least one Christian Church which had abandoned them at the Reformation is justified by the fact that there are useful purposes which they alone can serve, even though the life led by their members be not held to be in itself a more perfect kind of life than that adopted by other Christians. As in the matter of external religious ceremonies, many of which were abandoned at the Reformation by the Churches which accepted it, so in this matter of the disuse of regular asceticism, it is probably true to say that Protestant Christianity has not escaped the opposite danger to that which the Reformers saw in the religion of mediæval Europe. They were true to Christian principles in desiring to make all life religious and not to identify religion

too closely with special occasions, seasons, modes of life ; but it has often happened that, where there were fewer opportunities left for special attention to religion, religion has tended to slip out of common life altogether. External worship and asceticism must always be subordinate features of Christianity ; but they have their place there, as counterbalancing the worldly occupations which, though they can be discharged in a Christian spirit, can also so fill men's thoughts that religion may come to be forgotten

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## VII.

### CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL SERVICE.

We saw in the last lecture that asceticism has its place in Christianity as in nearly all other religions ; yet no one can pretend that insistence upon the worth of asceticism and the duty of practising it is a special contribution made by Christianity to ethics ; on the contrary in other religions more stress is set upon it and the practice of it is more frequent and widespread than among Christians. Stress upon social service on the other hand is, I think, generally recognized as characteristic of Christianity ; and there are, especially in America, professedly Christian congregations among whom pre-occupation with social service has thrust into the background everything else that is elsewhere associated with the word religion—not only the practice of asceticism but prayer and meditation, the knowledge and the worship of God, which are little cultivated and little esteemed in comparison with activities directed to the betterment, and in the main the material and economic betterment, of social conditions. The present lecture then will be directed to the consideration of the position of social service in the ethics of Christianity.

Though I have, in what I have just said, contrasted asceticism with social service as being the former less, the latter more conspicuous as a feature of the kind of conduct especially encouraged by Christianity, we shall nevertheless find a somewhat close correspondence between the Christian attitude towards asceticism and the Christian attitude towards social service. The Christian view of asceticism, as we saw, was based upon a principle remote alike from a denial of any real value to life and to natural happiness, such as has sometimes inspired asceticism in other creeds, and from that acceptance of life and the natural order as man's chief good and the only scene of his relations with God which is found in most primitive religions. It is a view of the value of

asceticism which regards it as pre-eminently *disciplinary*, directed to the detachment of the spirit from the merely natural order and to the quickening of the sense of sin and the need of a reconciliation with God. According to Christian doctrine this reconciliation cannot be effected by our own efforts ; it has been in principle effected on our behalf by Christ ; but the acceptance by each individual of a personal interest in Christ's achievement must involve self-denial. Self-denial, however, as understood by Christians, is not and does not aim at being suppression of self ; since a value is attributed in Christianity to individual personality which forbids Christians to regard the loss of it as the goal of their asceticism ; although it is said in the Gospel that we should be ready to lose our life in order to find it, no doubt in some higher and better form than that which is bound up with earthly conditions.

Now the duty of social service is by Christianity based on the precept to love our neighbour as ourselves—the second of the two great commandments. It is regarded as capable of expressing itself in the relations created between human beings by any social bond—domestic, national, professional, religious, or what not—but as nevertheless transcending in principle any finite society whatever. This is intimated by Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan, where it is taught that one whom the strongest racial and religious prejudices urge us to have nothing to do with, is yet our neighbour, whom we are to treat as one would treat a person loved not less than we love ourselves. The service of others required by the commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself cannot then be restricted within the limits of the family or the nation, of class or caste or race. On the other hand, it is never so conceived of in Christianity as to render the individual a mere means to the ends of any society of which he is a member. For it presupposes, in the standard laid down that it is *as oneself* that one must love one's neighbour, the principle of an equal value in every human personality, a value which is treated as nothing short of infinite. Immortality is proposed in Christian teaching as a hope set before

the individual human being; and, although in the New Testament immortality is generally thought of in terms of a *social* life, a continuation of that which now animates the Church as the "Body of Christ," yet in that life the union of the members of the Church is envisaged as a common relation to a personal head, to Christ. Thus neither on the one hand a selfish concern for one's own salvation apart from the fellowship of the redeemed, nor on the other hand a "socialism" which counts the individual person as less than an end in himself, can be regarded as consonant with the Christian conception of the social service required by the second great commandment of the Gospel, the commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself.

Again, the community in which this social service is the bond of union cannot in principle recognize the inferiority of any human soul on the ground of race or class or sex. This is affirmed in the earlier days of Christianity by the Apostle Paul "There is no place for Jew or Greek, there is no place for slave or freeman, there is no place for male or female, for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus"\* Here, however, the subsidiary mission of Christianity to the world of which I have several times spoken, as the preacher not only of the Gospel of Jesus but of the ethical tradition of Israel, may seem to have interfered with the carrying out by the Church into actual life of the principle enunciated by the Apostle. That tradition laid stress upon the subordination of servant to master, of wife to husband; although also upon the duty of kindly treatment in the one case, and upon that of conjugal faithfulness in the other. But the full emancipation either of the slave or of the woman was not immediately secured by the Christian Church, even when Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire. It did not indeed form part of the Church's programme; and in later times Christians have even sometimes thought themselves justified in resisting in the name of Christianity itself measures for emancipating slaves, or for

\* Gal III. 28.

promoting the equality of women with men. But this would scarcely have been possible except through forgetfulness that, notwithstanding the importance of the Old Testament and the ethical tradition of Israel as constituting the historical background of Christian ethics, it is not in accordance with Christian principles to place all that they contain on the same level of divine authority with the commandments which Jesus declared to contain the whole substance of the divine law. And it has never been doubted among Christians that Christianity denies neither to women equality with men, nor to slaves equality with freemen, in respect of the capacity to attain to the highest rank among the saints, to one woman indeed, the mother of Jesus, there has generally been accorded by Christians a veneration exceeding that paid to any other saint. It is easy to understand how, in the first period of Christian influence upon the ethics of western civilization, the full social emancipation of women would have seemed to those who inherited from the moral tradition of Israel, which formed, as we have seen, the background of Christian teaching about conduct, a profound reverence for the family, to be rather a surrender to the standards current in a society whose laxity in sexual matters was abhorrent to the Jew, than a necessary consequence of the religious equality which obtained within the Christian Church itself with respect to 'the means of grace and the hope of glory'. But no Christian doubted that women were as fully entitled as men to enjoy the privilege of participation in the sacraments in this life and to look forward to a joyful union with Christ in another. So too the subversion of the whole social order of the ancient church which a denunciation of slavery as a civil institution would have involved did not seem to the early Christians called for from persons who held that the kingdom of the world, the civil society of which slavery was an institution, was by no means the kingdom of God, nor was to become so apart from the catastrophic interruption of the existing order which they expected would take place at the second coming of Christ. It was, here again, enough that the slave should be as fully entitled as his

master to the privilege of participation in the sacraments in this life and to the expectation of a joyful union with Christ in another. But when, in far later days, the questions of the abolition of slavery and of the emancipation of women became, as the saying is, questions of practical politics in Europe, it was a great asset to the cause of those who promoted these movements that the equality of the two sexes and of all classes in the sight of God should be a tenet of the religion which was professed by the majority of Europeans

I have already called attention in an earlier lecture to the significant fact that when the Emperor Julian, after the first establishment of Christianity as the religion of the empire by his uncle Constantine, attempted on his own accession to the throne to revive the worship of the older gods and invest it anew with the prestige of which Constantine had deprived it, he could by his own confession only hope to oppose Christianity if there were incorporated into the older religion a principle of general philanthropy, of care for necessitous strangers, because they were in need, which Christianity had brought into vogue and without which no religion could now, he thought, attract adherents accustomed to Christian institutions for the relief of suffering.

This principle of general philanthropy was a characteristic feature of Christianity, intimated as we saw, in Jesus' own parable of the Good Samaritan, where it is expressly taught that national or racial sympathies were not to limit the beneficence of his followers to those who were in need. The strength of national feeling is such that the essentially supra-national character of Christian brotherhood has been no doubt often forgotten by professing Christians. But the fact that (except for persons of Jewish descent, who have always been a minority among Christians and have never constituted a national unit, being scattered among other nations and reckoned for political purposes as belonging to the nations among whom they have dwelt), no Christian could ever claim the Founder and first preachers of his religion as belonging to his own nation, has served to remind even those who were tempted to forget it, that they have no right as citizens of a

particular country, to claim a privileged position as regards their Christian faith. Christian nations in sending out missionaries to preach Christianity are not sending them to preach a religion which belongs to their own nation any more than to any other. It is for this reason that nominally Christian governments have sometimes discouraged or even forbidden and, to the best of their ability, prevented the preaching of their own religion to conquered peoples, as tending to establish a bond of brotherhood between the ruling race and their subjects which might interfere with the political subordination of the latter. Such an attitude is at once a testimony to the transcendence of national distinctions by Christianity and a proof that those who adopt this attitude are Christians merely in name and not in genuine conviction.

No doubt, in every nation which has received Christianity, the Christianity of that nation has taken a certain colour from the national temperament. It is moreover quite in accordance with the principles of Christianity, as a religion which lays a stress greater than is laid by any other religion on the significance of history, to regard with approval the development of a national type of Christianity in each people which receives it. But while it conceives of every nation as having some contribution to make to the full realization of its own possibilities, it can never treat the nation as the ultimate recipient of moral loyalty. The saying of a certain German publicist\* that "the maintenance of the State justifies every sacrifice and is superior to every moral rule," is not consistent with the teaching of Christianity. A Christian may and ought to love his own country and sacrifice himself for its welfare, as he may and ought to love his own family and sacrifice himself for it; yet his ultimate loyalty, so far as he is a Christian, is neither to his own particular family or to his own particular nation, but to the universal family of which God is the Father, the universal kingdom of which Christ is the King. Nationalism can never play any but a subordinate part in a

\* Rümelin, quoted by Sidgwick, *Practical Ethics* (1898), p. 65.

genuine Christian view of life, for a Christian, in the often quoted words of the brave English nurse who gave her life for her country in the Great War, " Patriotism is not enough."

The mention just now of the universal kingdom of which Christ is King calls to mind the importance in the earliest Christian teaching of the thought of a *sovereignty* or *reign* of God. It is indeed this form that the social ideal of Christianity takes in the discourses of Jesus himself. The thought of an age in which God himself should reign over his people, either directly or through some anointed representative, hovered before the eyes of many of the Israelites at the beginning of the Christian era and it was, it would seem, as this anointed representative, ' Messiah ' or ' Christ,' that Jesus claimed the allegiance of his fellow countrymen. He spoke much of the Kingdom or Reign of God; he came forward as the herald of its establishment on earth, and seems to have used language implying that he would himself discharge the kingly office therein, and he accepted a few days before his death the homage of those who saluted him as the son of their ancient kings coming in the name of their God \*. He frequently used the imagery found in other literature of the period which shadowed forth this looked for state of triumph and happiness as a feast or banquet, whereat his faithful followers should eat and drink with him at his table †. This imagery and the whole conception of a reign of God was of course capable of a gross and literal interpretation, but the whole tenor of the teaching of Jesus was directed towards spiritualizing it. According to that teaching it is the poor in spirit, the persecuted for righteousness' sake, those who are in their lowliness like little children, who are to inherit it.‡ It will not be the reward of a complacent reliance on religious privileges; the harlots and the publicans (that is the hated class of tax-farmers and tax-collectors who were believed to make themselves rich by extortion and injustice) will enter into it before the religious and respectable professors

\* Mark XI 9 f, Matt XXI 9

† Luke XXII 30

‡ Matt V. 3, 10, XIX 14

of piety, because in their consciousness of their need for forgiveness they welcome the call to repentance which falls on deaf ears when addressed to men who think they have nothing to repent of.\* Nor is it to be limited to the children of Israel many will come from the east and from the west and will sit down in it with the illustrious patriarchs of the Old Testament, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, while unworthy descendants of those patriarchs will remain without † So far no doubt it would be possible to suppose that the kingdom was to be a future state of earthly glory reserved for those who had enjoyed none in this life. But the saying that the kingdom of God is 'in your midst' or 'within you' ‡ (the text will allow of either interpretation) carries one's thoughts in another direction. The Kingdom or Reign of God, though yet to come in its full manifestation, is already present where a society is living in loving obedience to God's will. Hence in one of his parables § Jesus likens it to a plant which grows from small beginnings to be a great tree; and in others || uses similitudes which suggest rather a present possession of those who will follow him than something belonging altogether to a future state. The express assertion of the Apostle Paul that the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink—not a literal banquet—but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit ¶ is an interpretation of Jesus' teaching which most readers who are familiar with the Gospels will acknowledge to be in accordance with the mood of his Master and to echo the words of that Master when he spoke \*\* of the quest of the kingdom of God *and his righteousness* as the first duty of those who would be his disciples.

The connexion is an intimate one between the conception of the heavenly state found in the earliest monuments of Chris-

\* Matt XXI. 31, Luke V 30 ff

† Matt VIII 11

‡ Luke XVII 21.

§ Mark IV 30 ff.

|| Matt XIII 44, 45.

¶ Rom XIV 17

\*\* Matt VI 33.



tianity as a kingdom or organized society and the emphasis on social service which has been characteristic of the religion throughout. As a matter of fact there has been among Christians much piety of an individualistic type. There have been mystics who have longed, like the philosopher Plotinus who, though himself no Christian, has had, through the influence of his writings on the great Christian teacher Augustine and otherwise, no little effect on Christian thought—to fly “alone to him who is Alone”\*. There have been recluses who could quote with approval the saying of the Stoic Seneca, also no Christian, that he was always the wiser for going into company†. There have been devout worshippers who have cared to know nothing but themselves and their God, and anxious penitents wholly intent on working out their own salvation. But none of these have been quite faithful to the tradition of the New Testament. There salvation is always envisaged as social; it is where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ that his presence is to be looked for,‡ while it is not as ‘the one without a second’ but as the Father of a beloved Son, himself the firstborn among many brethren, that God is chiefly envisaged§. Thus the full nature of God as revealed in Christian experience can only be expressed in the threefold Name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is implied in this name that the life of the Christian society, which is described as the body of Christ, animated by his spirit, is no less than the eternal life of God himself, manifested in Jesus, and making its abode in those to whom he has communicated the spirit which was in Jesus. A religion which encourages its adherents to dissociate religious from social experience is thus most certainly not genuine Christianity. The stress which genuine Christianity has ever laid upon social service is rooted in its experience of God as manifested in him who said that whatever

\* *Enn* VI 9, § 11

† Seneca, *Ep* VII 3 quoted in *The Imitation of Christ*, bk. I, c. 20

‡ *Matt* XVIII 20

§ See *Mark* I 11, IX 7, *Rom* VIII. 29.

was done to the least of his brethren was judged as done to him.\*

The social service inculcated by Christianity has never been extended by Christians to include service rendered to other living beings than men. While kindness to the lower animals and avoidance of cruelty to them are congenial to Christianity, and some Christian saints, like Francis of Assisi, have been distinguished by their kindness to them, Christians have been accustomed to draw a line more sharply than it is drawn in some other faiths between the duty which we owe to other human beings, who share our capacity for communion with God and for membership of a society of which the bond is found in such communion, and that which we owe to living beings who are not thus capable. The view held by some that a human being may be born again as an animal or an animal as a human being would of course justify one in treating a being who in this stage of existence is not capable of membership of the divine society as nevertheless capable of it in another. But this belief of the possibility of the rebirth of the same individual in another living form has never been entertained among Christians. The absence of this belief from Christianity explains also its rejection of any rule of abstinence from animal flesh as a Christian duty. Christian ascetics have often observed such a rule of abstinence as a form of self-denial, and it is part of the rule of some orders of Christian monks, while any Christian who should be convinced that avoidance of flesh-food is more conducive to health or to the control of the animal appetites than indulgence in it, would be perfectly justified thereby in practising such abstinence. But he could not regard it as a precept of his religion. So again with respect to abstinence from intoxicating drinks. There are many Christians who so abstain on the ground of the grievous mischiefs to which the excessive use of them leads, and which seem to be best excluded by avoiding them altogether. But here again, it cannot be considered as in accordance with the Christian religion to look upon any parti-

\* Matt. XXV 40, 45.

cular form of food or drink as in itself prohibited by that religion. Here Christianity definitely broke both with its parent religion of Judaism which had an elaborate distinction of foods which were regarded as clean from others which were regarded as unclean, it being legitimate to partake of the former but not of the latter. Two passages of the New Testament the saying of Jesus that "there is nothing from without a man that going into him can defile him"\* and the narrative of the revelation to the Apostle Peter that he might eat of any food because "what God hath cleansed, that he must not call common,"† may be taken as expressing the doctrine of Christianity in this respect. The saying of Jesus is not indeed directly aimed at the Jewish food law, on the contrary there is no reason to doubt that he himself, as a matter of course, observed that law, and no reason to think that, living as he did exclusively among Jews, he ever raised the question of its permanent and universal validity, a question which, as soon as Gentiles came to be converted to Christianity, was bound to present itself to his followers. Certainly, when it did so present itself, they knew of no pronouncement of their Master in this respect to which to appeal. Yet the declaration which I have quoted in principle implied the abrogation of any such law, and in refusing to regard the old food law as binding on the new society, they can hardly but have felt themselves in accord with the spirit of his teaching, however strange and unwelcome to themselves, as we see in the story of Peter's dream, the thought of indiscriminate freedom in the matter may at first have been

Reference has already been made in an earlier lecture to the Christian attitude towards war and military service. But it may be convenient to bring together here the facts regarding this attitude, and to indicate the principles upon which it is based. As is well-known, there are Christian societies which regard the taking of any part in war as absolutely for-

\* Mark VII. 15.

† Acts X. 9 ff.

bidden to Christians; but this has not been the position adopted by the Christian Church as a whole. It is generally admitted by Christians that in the end the principles of Christianity are inconsistent with hostility among Christians; but a majority of Christians would acknowledge that, so long as there is a great part of the human race which does not practise or even acknowledge the law of loving one's neighbour as oneself, circumstances may arise in which war is justified. From a very early period of the history of Christianity Christians have served in armies, and even in the New Testament, while military officers are often mentioned as coming into contact with Christ, nothing is said to suggest that they were called upon by him to abandon their calling as unlawful. But since it is the Christian law that one must love one's neighbour as oneself, it has ever been held by Christian teachers that, although it might in certain cases be a man's duty to fight and kill a fellow man, it was never one's duty to hate him. The attitude of the soldier must be that of a dutiful servant of the law, executing the sentence of a magistrate, it must not express personal ill-will, and the harm done to the enemy must be limited to that necessary to destroy his resistance; to the wounded or incapacitated enemy every kindly attention is due. It is not of course to be pretended that warfare among Christians has always been conducted in this spirit; but it is warfare conducted in this spirit and no other that a Christian can reconcile to his conscience. Here one sees at once an agreement with and a difference from the defence of warfare which we find in the *Bhagavadgītā*\*. Both according to the Christian doctrine and to that which the poet of the *Gītā* puts into the mouth of Krishna, it may under certain circumstances be one man's duty to fight with another, if so be he remembers all the time the bond of unity which in fact exists between them; but this bond of unity is differently represented in Christianity and in the Hindu sacred book to which I have just referred. In the *Gītā*, it is described as the essential oneness of all souls, whose separateness is in the last

\* Esp. in Lesson II.

resort an illusion, the warrior is bidden to bear in mind his own identity with his foe as alike partial and transient manifestations of the One Eternal Being. Christianity, as I have before pointed out, allows a greater measure of independence to each individual soul, the warrior and his foe are not in its view merely appearances of one and the same real Being, but they are children of one Father and equally objects of his love; and it is this, rather than their essential identity with one another and with God, that they are called upon not to forget when they find themselves opposed in battle. There will be, I think, other subsidiary differences, corresponding to this principal difference between the two views which in their practical conclusion agree so well. Thus in the Christian scheme history has a greater importance attached to it, and a greater substantiality is attributed to the individual personality than in the philosophy of the *Gītā*. Hence war is regarded in Christianity as belonging to an earlier stage of historical development like the Old Testament with its warlike stories in the Bible, when the principles of the New Testament shall have prevailed throughout the world there will be no more war; in the *Gītā* it is regarded rather as part of the illusion which the religious man, whose mind is concentrated on the divine Being "indifferent to time and place," learns not to treat as after all so serious a matter as it seems to him who has not penetrated the secret of its unreality.

The difference of theory here is of course important, but in both cases we have a like practical result in the recommendations to the warrior, in his sentiments towards his opponent, to realize, even while engaged in mortal combat, the participation of both combatants in a common nature; and though different conceptions of that common nature no doubt affect the sentiments based upon them, there is a close parallel between the two reconciliations of a kind of activity with which no society of men has found itself able to dispense and an ethical principle which at first sight seems to be inconsistent with it.

It might be suggested that the doctrine of an ultimate identity of all selves as manifestations of one eternal Self is

the philosophical truth of which the phraseology in which God is called ' Father ' and men his ' children ' and ' brethren ' of one another is but a translation into popular language. I think however that, while no doubt the language which describes God as a Father is metaphorical rather than philosophical, a different philosophy is required for its interpretation ; a philosophy which should, as I have said, assign to the individual persons and to the history in which they play their parts a substantial reality not allowed to them in the doctrine of the *Gītā*

To turn to another point. The accumulation of wealth is a pursuit which some of the sayings of Christ seem to condemn no less than the waging of war ; and, however inconsistent the practice of Christians may often have been with the principles of their religion, it is no doubt an essential tenet of Christianity that economic prosperity cannot be regarded, as it often is in the Old Testament, in the light of the reward which virtue and obedience to God's law may reasonably expect of him, since the life which Christ himself lived, though supremely well pleasing to God, was one of poverty and suffering. The motive of much Christian asceticism has been that of shewing love to Christ by sharing his poverty and sufferings ; and while the Christian Church has recognized, as Christ himself appears to have done, that there is a place for riches and rich men in the order of society, the detachment of the will from earthly possessions and the readiness to surrender them, if required, for Christ's sake is enjoined on all Christians by their religion ; although, as we have already seen, self-denial is valued by Christianity not as a means of acquiring merit or power but as a method of discipline exercised on the self-regarding appetites and passions with a view to the establishment of love to God and our neighbour as the ruling principles of human life

Our account of the contribution made by Christianity to Ethics in the matter of social service has to be completed by calling attention to one characteristic of it which has not yet been sufficiently emphasized. The benevolence which Christianity inculcates is not only to transcend those divisions

between human beings which may be regarded as morally indifferent. Certainly it is a Christian principle that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him."\* But those who neither fear God nor work righteousness are no less the objects of his redeeming love. The saying of Jesus that he was come "to seek and to save that which was lost,"† the parables in which he pictures God as the shepherd in quest of the one lost sheep,‡ or as the father running to welcome the returning prodigal, falling on his neck, and kissing him;§ the reproaches which he earned from the respectable folk of his day for consorting with the publicans and harlots,|| his tender pity for these outcasts of society as shown in the stories of Zacchaeus¶ and of the 'woman who was a sinner,'\*\* these have been the inspiration of a ministry which has ever attracted some of the choicest spirits among Christians, a ministry to those from whom not only the prejudices of race or class but the consciousness of moral superiority might well divert the sympathies of men and women themselves in love with virtue. It will, I think, be generally recognized that such a ministry is the special glory of Christianity. There have been times and places in which Christians have neglected it, and others in which those who were not Christians have been roused to emulate it. But it is inseparably associated with what is most original and distinctive in the life and teaching of Jesus, and with that aversion from every kind of self-complacency or claim to merit which we have already seen to be characteristic of Christian piety. Remote no less from that facile readiness to find God revealed in the evil as well as in the good which sometimes proceeds from pre-occupation with the thought of the ultimate Reality as transcending all distinctions, than from the rigorous moralism which can see nothing of value in a personality

\* Acts X. 35.

† Luke XIX. 10.

‡ Luke XV. 4 ff.

§ Luke XV. 11 ff.

|| Mark II. 16.

¶ Luke XIX. 1 ff.

\*\* Luke VII. 36 ff.

which does not conform itself to the fair order in which society has at any particular time embodied its aspirations after the good life, a genuine Christian philanthropy is inspired by the passionate desire to imitate Jesus in seeking the outcast, but only in order to call him to repentance; a repentance, however, the need of which does not divide him from those who have not shared his fall or his disgrace. For when Jesus contrasts the sinner who repenteth with the "ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance,"\* he is speaking in irony. The assertion of the Apostle Paul that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"† is true to his Master's thought. The lesson of the great saying of that Master to which I have just referred, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance,‡ is surely the lesson that a true estimate of his own position will not allow the person who has been kept in the path of virtue to claim for himself for the merit of his well-doing, but will drive him to confess his own shortcomings and to join the repentant outcast in ascribing his salvation from sin wholly to the mercy and love of his heavenly Father.

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\* LUKE X. 1.

† ROM. III. 23.

‡ LUKE XV. 7, 10.



## VIII

### CONCLUSION

I have now reached the conclusion of my task, and the time has come to put together the results of the account of the contribution to Ethics made by Christianity. Obviously to attempt in eight lectures more than a bare summary of the subject would have been a vain undertaking. For this last Lecture of the course I will therefore first recapitulate what I take to be the main heads of what I have put before you and then indicate some topics which in a fuller treatment of my theme would have had to be introduced, but which I can now do no more than mention.

Although Religion and Morality are not to be identified, the interaction between them throughout the whole history of both has been constant and nowhere is the relation of the two more intimate than in the case of Christianity. I have tried in this course of lectures to show that the principal items of the contribution made by Christianity to Ethics have been the following. In the first place the two great commandments of love to God and love to our neighbour, in which Jesus summed up the law of God, with their implication of a morality which is not a system of arbitrary prohibitions or taboos but is founded entirely on a principle which satisfies the reason and conscience of man. Secondly, a consciousness of sin and of the need of forgiveness therefor, which deepens the seriousness of the Christian's outlook on life. Thirdly, an attitude towards God of filial confidence, in which humility and intimacy are mingled in a fashion appropriate to the sonship of God by adoption through union with Christ which the Christian claims to enjoy. Fourthly, an emphasis on the importance of social service based upon the Christian conception of the divine nature as revealed in Jesus Christ, and perpetually manifested as the spiritual power which binds

the members of the Christian fellowship to Christ and to each other. But this enumeration leaves a great deal unsaid. An enquiry into the effect produced upon the Christianity of different nations by the previous temperament, history, and traditions of those nations would be profoundly interesting; but I can now do no more than point out that such an effect must inevitably produce various types of Christian religious experience with their corresponding ethical consequences. I have indeed been able to devote some minutes to the relations between the ethical ideals of Christianity and those of the Jews, among whom it originated, and also those of the Greeks and Romans, who, the Greeks intellectually and the Romans politically, dominated the world to which its preaching, after it had emerged from Palestine, was first addressed. But I have not even done as much as that in respect of the mutual action and reaction of Christian ethics upon those of the races and nations that received Christianity at a later date.

Again, a full discussion of the contribution made by Christianity would require, to be complete, some comparison between the influence of Christianity on moral theory and practice with that of the other great historical religions of mankind. Some of these moreover have themselves affected Christianity and been in turn affected by it, and this sometimes by way of direct influence, sometimes of repulsion and reaction. In particular, as I have several times pointed out, the religion of Israel, which was the religion of the Founder and first preachers of Christianity, and whose sacred books are included in the Christian Bible, is always to be borne in mind as the background of all Christian teaching. Through that religion itself again some ancient faiths, possibly the Egyptian, certainly the Babylonian and, we must add, the Persian or Zoroastrian, which is a living religion to-day in the form of Parsism, have indirectly exerted an influence on Christianity, which sprang from the religion of Israel. Later Judaism also was in its turn on the one hand largely determined in its development by the necessity of defining its own position in contradistinction to that of its sister faith, while

on the other hand it has, in countries where the majority of the inhabitants professed Christianity, been liable to adopt something of the habits and sentiments current in the society which formed its environment. The religions of the Graeco-Roman world in which the Christian Church, after it had left its Jewish cradle, made itself at home, acted on it at first no doubt rather by way of repulsion. Christians were inclined to stress the manner of life which it had inherited from the ancient religion of Israel in opposition to that which they found prevailing among the Gentiles to whom it directed its missionary efforts. Yet, as more and more Gentiles became Christians, they inevitably brought into the Christian Church habits and sentiments formed under the influence of the religions which they had abandoned; and thus these religions in their turn came to exert a considerable influence at second hand over the historical development of Christianity especially in one sphere of conduct, namely that of worship. The religions of the less cultured peoples of the north and east of Europe, to which Christianity afterwards penetrated, no doubt in their own measure played a similar part in the evolution of Christian ethics in those parts of the world. There too at first their influence would have been mainly of a negative kind. Certain kinds of conduct hitherto approved would be forbidden to Christian converts, new duties enjoined upon them and new standards set before them. Afterwards there would appear in the ethical ideas of the peoples who had adopted Christianity the inevitable traces of their inheritance from their non-Christian ancestors; and there would result from the attempt to apply Christian principles to the life of a new society new developments of those principles which would not have been produced in the original environment of these principles.

Then a history of the contribution made by Christianity to Ethics would have to take account of the effects upon the outlook and conduct of the nations professing Christianity due to their long contact and frequent conflict throughout the middle ages with another great religion, Islam. This influence of Islam on Christianity was probably exerted principally

in two opposite ways firstly, by maintaining a sense of unity among these Christian nations, which, though frequently at variance among themselves, for several hundred years recognized themselves as having a common cause against their Moslem antagonists; and secondly, by means of the debt owed by the schools of Christian Europe from the twelfth to the sixteenth century to the great Moslem thinkers and scholars; such as those who were known to them, through a corruption of their Arabic names as Avicenna, Algazel, and Averroes. Without the impact of the ideas of these men the development of philosophy and theology in Christendom would have been quite other than it was; and ethics can never be independent of philosophy and theology. The contact between the main body of Christians and the followers of the great religions of which this country is the parent was, until comparatively recent times, too slight for any mutual influence to be perceptible before the modern period; but where such contact did exist between the latter and any section of the Christian Church, as between the ancient Syrian Church in India and their non-Christian neighbours, or again between the northern Buddhists and the Christian sects, reckoned as heretical by the majority of Christians, who spread eastward from Persia and penetrated into the Chinese Empire during the earlier middle ages, no doubt mutual influence was exerted. In our own day the enormous increase of the means of communication has broken down the barriers between nations and creeds to a degree hitherto unknown; and the opportunity of a frank interchange of religious experiences between the followers of different faiths exists, of which it is to be hoped that good use may every day be more and more made; and this must certainly have its effect on the ethical theory and practice of those who, whatever creed they profess, will be in a position to profit by all the religious experiences and traditions which this new intercourse will have brought into the common stock.

Nor is it only other religions, properly so called, the effect of which upon Christianity would need to be investigated by anyone proposing to treat with the fulness which it

deserves, our subject of the contribution made by Christianity to ethics. He would have to consider the effects upon the ethical ideals of Christians of the interaction of Christianity with philosophies and schools of thought—with Stoicism and Platonism in antiquity, with Aristotelianism in the middle ages, with the literary classicism of the Renaissance, with the speculations of Bruno and Descartes, of Spinoza and Leibniz, of Hobbes and Locke and Berkeley and Hume, of Kant and Hegel and Schopenhauer, of Comte and Bergson and Croce, and many another; with the scientific doctrines of Galileo and Newton and Darwin, or, in our own day, of Einstein and Freud; with the opposed moralities of Tolstoy and Nietzsche—one could go on for ever with the list. Nor would he be wise to ignore the influence of writers less strictly didactic than those whom I have just been enumerating—of poets and men of letters who have expressed and moulded the thoughts and emotions which were stirring in the spiritual world of their day; or of the political movements—capitalism, nationalism, imperialism, socialism, communism and the rest,—with all of which Christianity has had to do, and all of which have challenged her to apply to the problems which they raised the great principles of which she is the custodian—the principles of love to God and man, conceived as she has conceived them, as the Father righteous and loving, and the child needing forgiveness before he can enjoy his Father's love.

Once more an adequate treatment of the subject of the contribution of Christianity to ethics should have regard not only to the fundamental principles of Christianity as stated in universally accepted documents of the faith but also should consider how the Christian Church has dealt,—and in later times, after that Church had lost its outward unity, how different branches of the Christian Church have dealt—with the manifold problems presented by the complex development of civilization and by the new knowledge gained through the scientific and speculative activities of the human mind during the centuries of the life of Christianity in the world. But this would be a far vaster task than I could have ventured upon.

The world of men has of late been coming with extraordinary rapidity to be *one* as it has never been before in respect of the material setting of life. The distinctive features of different countries tend more and more to disappear, at least in the great urban centres of population, everywhere one meets with railway trains, motor cars, bicycles, electric light, cinemas, restaurants, wireless programmes and so forth, indistinguishable from those which one finds in other cities. Mass production floods the world with articles of use or luxury, all made after the same pattern. If we care to learn a lesson from the past, we may call to mind the somewhat similar phenomenon on a very much smaller scale which we observe at the time of the dominance of the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean world at the beginning of the Christian era. There too an organized system of communication brought about an outward unity in many respects over a certain area which demanded to correspond with it an inward unity in the form of a universally accepted religion. The attempt made by the imperial government to meet their demand by establishing such a religion in the shape of a worship of the emperors failed, as any such political device was bound to fail, to satisfy the cravings of the spirit. The demand was eventually met from an unexpected quarter by Christianity. It is no doubt the faith and hope of Christians that the like demand on a far larger scale can and will be met by it also; but obviously, were this expectation to be fulfilled, the Christianity which should meet the demand must be a Christianity which had shown itself able to incorporate into itself the religious experience of peoples to whom it has so far remained foreign, even as it has in the past proved itself able to incorporate those of the peoples of Europe. Christianity is already, despite its historical continuity with primitive Christianity and its genuine identity of type therewith, nevertheless in many respects very different from it. It will then be, if the hopes of its adherents should be fulfilled, in many ways different from what it is now, although historically continuous with it, and preserving that genuine identity of type in virtue of which the Christianity of to-day can justly claim that name. But

that, however it is ultimately to be met, there exists in the world of to-day a need similar on a vastly extended scale to that which Christianity met in the Mediterranean world of nineteen centuries ago, is hardly to be disputed, except by those who think that humanity no longer needs religion of any kind at all.

For my part, I find it difficult to believe that those who think thus are in the right. The sense of being in the Presence of Something or Someone to which or to whom all else that we experience, ourselves included, is related by way of dependence,—and related, since we are thus ourselves included, not merely remotely and inferentially but directly and intimately, which therefore excites in us a sentiment of awe and reverence which may range from a cowering fear to the perfect love which 'casts out fear';\* this sense, though in individuals who are caught up into the mechanism of the modern town dweller's life it may be relegated to the background of consciousness, can scarcely be lost altogether by man, with whose characteristic endowment of reason 'looking before and after'† it is so closely bound up. Nor can any other function of the human spirit take its place. It is worthy of remark that an eminent thinker of our day, who has in his earlier writings defended the view that religion is no more than an infantile form of philosophy, is now inclined to find in it something more than this—a recognition of the continuity of our life with that of the past, which forbids us to cast history behind us and essay to start afresh altogether. I do not think indeed that this is an adequate account of the nature or function of religion, but it goes beyond the account of it as no more than philosophy in the cradle, and gives to it a permanent significance by seating it in the depths of our self-conscious being.

But though I do not believe that man, remaining man, will ever cease to be, as he has been called, the religious animal, I am very well aware that there is much in the secular civilization of to-day that tends to repress and to starve the

\* 1 John IV 18

† Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, IV. 4, 7.

religious sentiment and to hinder it from having that free play which is requisite for the full development of human personality.

And here we may turn our minds back to some considerations to which I called your attention before in my fifth Lecture, that lecture in which I discussed the place of religion in Christian ethics. I am thinking of the considerations suggested by the recognition of the first great commandment of love to God in Christianity as indeed inseparably connected in the Christian conception of religion with the love of our neighbour and the service of others which that love entails or rather (as only practical love can be, as we saw, strictly speaking, commanded) which that love consists in; yet as not identical with it, so that its inculcation should be a mere idle repetition of the commandment to love our neighbour. We saw, that however true it may be, and however important to maintain, that morality is autonomous, that it needs no external sanction in the form of rewards for obedience and penalties for disobedience annexed to it by a legislator to give it authority, yet that, when it is divorced from religion, its intrinsic authority tends to be disregarded, because this authority of the moral law is one of the characteristics of the Reality presented in human experience which has the power to excite the sentiment of religious awe in the human soul. The ethics of Kant are not unreligious, notwithstanding his insistence on the autonomy of morality, just because the moral law for him was, in the majesty of its self-evidencing authority, the proper object of religious awe and of a worship which he was ever ready to render to it. And thus where men, however willing to acknowledge themselves bound to do certain things and abstain from certain others, deny to religion the place in human life which it has held throughout the history of the race as a necessary function of the human spirit, they will check in themselves the instinct to offer to the voice of the moral law in their conscience the reverence and worship which it excited in Kant, and will thus come to doubt whether the authority in that voice, to



which they refuse the natural response, is not illusory, and whether the individual's desire for self-expression and the sentiment of affection to those whom he loves do not sufficiently account for the obligations which he recognizes. We were led by such reflections as these to the conclusion that the implication of the first great commandment of the Christian law—the implication that morality rests upon a principle transcending the individual consciousness and belonging to the spiritual principle of unity in all reality, a principle conceived of in Christianity as revealing its nature in the experience of mutual love,—cannot be disregarded without imperiling morality, or, in other words, that morality cannot dispense with religion, not in the sense that it requires an external sanction, but in the sense that, except as interpreted by religion, it must appear as an unintelligible fact, incoherent with the rest of experience, and so come easily to be suspected of being no more than an obstinate prejudice which the wise man will endeavour to disregard.

These considerations are very relevant to the situation in which we find ourselves to-day. For it can scarcely be questioned that not one religion but all religions are threatened—that Religion in any form is threatened—by the opposition of a purely secular view of the world, relying on a purely economic interpretation of history, and denying the interest of humanity in such an inner life of the soul and such a quest of a spiritual and eternal reality as give significance to the religious institutions of every nation. For every nation has religious institutions, though in some they are peculiar to itself, in others they are those of some religious fellowship which transcends national boundaries, like Islam or Christianity. In many, perhaps in most, there are religious institutions of more than one kind, various groups attaching themselves to different institutions. But until quite modern times it would have been a natural question to ask 'Of what religion is such and such a nation?'; though the answer would often have been . 'Of more than one;' and it is also only in quite modern times that religious neutrality has come to be generally considered as the proper

attitude of the national government or State. Now however indifference to religion is considered even by persons who are themselves far from indifferent to religion to be the correct position for the State or nation to adopt, and the government of one powerful nation has even identified itself with hostility to every kind of religion. Yet the danger to religion is probably greater from an irreligious secularity pervading the life of civilized men and leading them rather to ignore than to persecute religion, than from what may without absurdity be called the militant religion of irreligion associated with the communism of Moscow. To meet that danger it behoves all who believe that religion is a permanent and necessary factor in a human existence which shall be healthy and normal, to do all that can be done to keep alive in the heart of the race the fear of God and in the life of the race the worship of God. The history of no land has been more full than that of India, itself the mother of more than one great religious system, of that grand adventure of the spirit, that quest after God, which is the inspiration of all the faiths that have raised humanity above satisfaction with the life of the senses and given it an interest in that which is eternal. To India therefore those who in every nation are concerned that this high quest should not perish among men look with confidence for sympathy and aid. Now nothing is more conducive to the arousing and strengthening of sympathy than the free mutual communication of religious and moral experience. But this mutual communication will be of most avail when it is neither so embittered by a passionate prejudice in favour of our own traditions that there can be no patient endeavour to enter, to the best of our ability, into those of others; nor so emasculated by a timid courtesy that the profoundest contrasts are ignored or treated as unimportant. It must be an intercourse in which facts are faced without either slurring of differences or obscuring of likenesses. It must keep in view at once the importance of obtaining as far as possible a sympathetic understanding of others and readiness to learn from them, and the equal importance of maintaining in its fulness whatever one

believes oneself to have learned in one's own experience, without watering it down to avoid giving offence. It must be a mutual communication, frank, serious, humble and friendly, in which each participant shall not 'talk for victory' or aim at pleasing, but shall seek the good of others; not, however, in a spirit of self-satisfied complacency, but with a genuine desire to do to others as we would they would do unto us. It is to a free mutual communication of this kind that these lectures are intended to make, however inadequately, a certain contribution. And so I end, thanking you, gentlemen, once more for the patience with which you have heard me, and wishing that what I have had to say had been more worthy of your attention, and less unworthy of my theme.

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